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The cottage is the perfect place for smoking food but finding a quality smoker in Canada was impossible, says Richard Maskobi, an avid meat, fish, cheese – you name it! – smoker. The former banker searched high and low for the right model without success.

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theartofnovascotia.com

Superior design and construction

Builder Gilbert + Burke welcomes designer Peter Groza

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Since opening its doors in 2000, Gilbert + Burke has made it a mission to understand and embody the dreams of people passionate about creating spaces to live in nature. “That's why we don't just design or remodel beautiful houses,” says Cathy Burke, vice-president of marketing. “We craft perfect homes.”

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Interco's durable, welded lifting, floating and pole docks are made from aluminum, steel, or wood and manufactured on-site in their Peterborough facility. "Customer service is our main priority," says Ben. "We understand how important it is for cottagers to have reliable access to their water. That's why we

deliver what we promise on time and ensure a smooth experience from start to finish." Interco also supplies dock components (and advice) for DIYers out of its retail store (PFW Country Store).



Colin and Justin's deck on Season Two of *Cabin Pressure* was built by Interco Docks.

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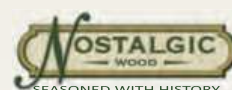
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Cottage Life

Fall 2015

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Our 26th annual photo contest closes on Sept. 14, but you can still vote in the Fan Choice Awards until Oct. 4. Blipp the chair above to vote.

And look for the Blippar icon in this issue for bonus content. See p.14

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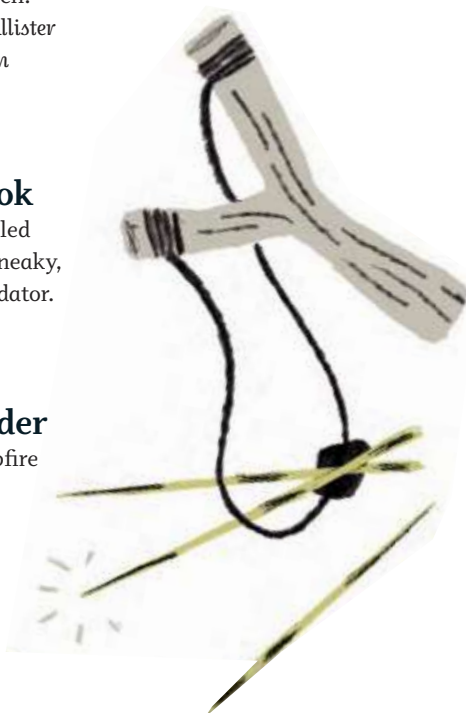
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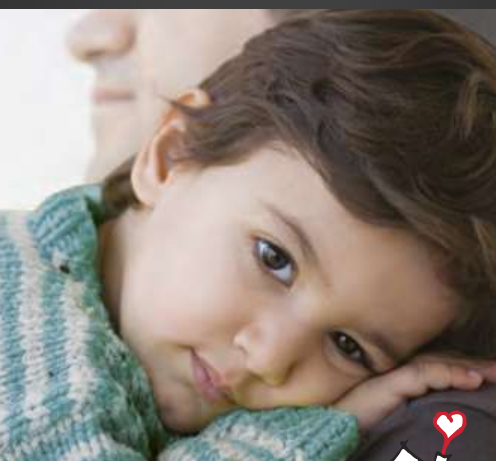
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WHAT I'VE LEARNED AT THE COTTAGE

1. Your friends will be underwhelmed by the photos of your new, exposed septic bed, while you can hardly contain your own excitement.
2. When you hear grunts outside the cottage, and your husband says that he'd never tease you by pretending to be a bear, he's actually not kidding.
3. You'll be giddy at being able to flick a switch and turn on a light, thanks to the new solar system. And yet you'll still bring out the candles and kerosene lamps after dark.
4. Be grateful and enjoy every minute, because there will never be enough sunsets, refreshing swims, hot sunny days, cold white wine, nightly card games, or special time with family and friends.

Sixteen-year-old Abigail Sutherland loved her cottage. The moose antlers that hang over the front door, the faded red paint, and the garbage bin fashioned from a hollowed-out log are, in her words, "somewhat tacky," but that didn't seem to matter.

In August, Abi's dad, Michael, sent me an essay that his daughter completed for her grade 11 English class. The assignment was to write about some thing, place, or activity that she enjoyed. Abi chose to write about the cottage.

Parents are naturally proud of their kids' accomplishments. And we're excited to find out, sometimes inadvertently, how much our kids love the cottage. I was never quite sure how my girls felt about our off-grid island until I saw one of them excitedly showing a friend around. It means a lot to me to know that they are happy there. But it means everything to my husband. There's nowhere in the world that he would rather be. "Heaven exists," he wrote recently from the cottage in a text to the girls and me. "And it is here."

Abi's essay is not the first classroom assignment that I've received from a parent, but it has had the most impact. The writing is remarkably candid: "My parents are divorced," she says, "so I have two other rooms, both of which are nice, comfortable, but my room at the cottage will forever be the place where I feel the most at peace." It shines with insight: "The cottage means freedom...and allows you to understand who you are outside of the world that you are used to." It is now also unbearably sad to read. In June, Abi Sutherland died in a car crash.

How do we reconcile ourselves to such loss? I don't know the answer, but somehow we do. And loss reminds us to be aware of all that is precious in our lives, to be grateful every day for what's most important—the people we love.

That's the thought I want to leave with you in my final "Editor's Note." Oh, I'm not going far—just down one flight



to a new office, where I'll be taking on the role of publisher of *Cottage Life*. With this issue, I'm delighted to introduce you to the magazine's talented new editor, Michelle Kelly, formerly *Cottage Life*'s executive editor. Michelle's current claim to fame is having visited the most cottages of any of our editors this summer—10 at last count! You can say hello to Michelle in the Cottage Life booth at the Fall Cottage Life Show in Toronto, October 23-25 (visit cottagelife.com for more details). Meanwhile, blipp my photo to instantly launch a video of Michelle and me talking about *Cottage Life*—and cottage life.

For the 15 years that I've been the editor, cottage life and *Cottage Life* have been much the same thing for me. I could write a book covering all that I've learned at the helm of this magazine. But it has been a particular pleasure to hear regularly from readers. Abi Sutherland wrote, "The cottage is like a gracious old friend who welcomes you home." I hope that you feel the same way about the magazine. And I hope that you have had as much fun as I have.

Penny



Blipp Penny's photo for a video of her with the new editor. New to blipping? See p.14

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Cottage Life



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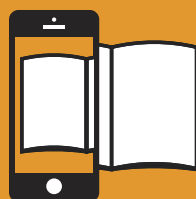
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Try it! Blipp the cocktails on p. 83, name them, and you could win a selection of Cottage Life Weekend Collection products

TWEET

@nobleloonlodge

I literally let out a “WHOA” when I saw the new @cottage-life mag. Best day ever when new issue comes out—this one with a #steak!

@keltiestewart

Hey @cottage-life thanks for the Frogmore Stew Recipe! Yum! In the Muskoka room at the cottage. Best. Dinner. Ever!

@thejeffnorton

So far my #Canada-Day is suffering from a lack of Molson, poutine, and the cottage. Might read @cottage-life on the train today to compensate.

@Louise244

So happy when @cottage-life magazine comes in the mail!

@AHolland.NCC

Dog has successfully gone for a swim. The rest of the gang are at the beach. Time for a barley sandwich #cottage-life



How one painter looked out the window and found her muse

LAST IMPRESSIONS

I have just read through the Early Summer '15 issue of *Cottage Life*. My husband and I have a Georgian Bay cottage which has been in his family since 1905. The Group of Seven initiated promotion of our Canadian landscapes, though their iconic paintings are now appreciated internationally. There are many fine contemporary artists continuing to follow in their footsteps. It was with great pleasure that I discovered your interesting article about the artist Rebecca Last (“Lake Effect”). Years ago I had a similar epiphany, which continues still, at our cottage. Our community, Cognashene, boasts many programs and events of very long standing, but it was not until 1990 that we were able to add an annual “Art On The Rocks” event.

—DIAN BOYD MCGIBBON, VIA EMAIL

SOME FINE TUNING

Your article “That’s Just the Way It Is” by David Zimmer (Summer '15) reminded me of a story from when I first purchased my cottage. The previous owner kept a radio in the boathouse, which he turned on when he was away to scare off beavers. At first I followed suit, but, soon, after explaining the reason to seasoned cottagers, I began to suspect that the radio did little other than cause noise. I kept the radio and we now call it “Beaver Radio” and use it in the kitchen to play music all day long.

—HEATHER B., LAKE MUSKOKA, ONT.

THEY DEMAND THE CONE OF SILENCE

We were very disappointed to see the letter from Ken Galloway regarding having fun and making noise in cottage country (“Turn Down for What?” Early Summer '15). We have serious problems with certain people making excessive noise at all hours. We have even gone so far as to close the whole cottage up tight and put our music on as a diversion, but you can still hear their music and sometimes feel its vibration inside. We are not the only ones on the lake to complain either; there is a huge group suffering so that one family can have some fun. We are all here to have fun, but the rest of us would like to hear loons, whippoorwills, and other birds, as well as the kids having a good time—not someone blasting a stereo across the lake all night long. We have grandkids who would like to sleep as well. Just be a bit quieter or shut down earlier.

—L. SPENCER, KAWARTHAS, ONT.

Mr. Galloway derides letter writers seeking some quiet at the cottage as “selfish.” He lauds the noise associated with many activities: boating, jet skiing, wakeboarding, and playing music among them. Nowhere does he mention that with all of these activities, and many others, key variables determining their general nuisance level are duration, frequency, and volume. It also seems that he does not know or care that noise over water travels far and wide. The level of Mr. Galloway’s “happy” summer sounds at my cottage is such that I now only go there from May 24 to Labour Day to do necessary chores. Summer in the city is much quieter than summer at the lake.

—COLIN READ, HALIBURTON COUNTY, ONT.

KEEPIN’ IT CLEAN

We have been subscribing to *Cottage Life* for six years and have been inspired by many of the ideas. After seeing all the outdoor showers in the magazine, our son-in-law Chris built us one! He did it in one day. The shower uses the heat of the sun in the rain barrel to keep us clean. It is terrific.

—D. PAXTON, OTTER LAKE, QUE. >>

BLESS THIS MESS

Had to try the Frogmore Stew recipe from the latest issue of *Cottage Life* ("A Fine Mess," Summer '15) and have to say, it was a hit! We (the Toronchuk family) enjoyed it with friends, including the Jacksons, the Beyers, Aaron, and guests on Memesagamesing Lake (photo, right).

—ROSEANNE TORONCHUK, VIA EMAIL

THE CHOICE IS CLEAR

My family and I are avid readers of *Cottage Life*, and, being food lovers, we especially look forward to the delicious recipes that are a part of each issue! Recently, while flipping through a number of old issues, I noticed many recipes for seafood and began thinking about how your magazine could help promote sustainable options. There are some good tools available, such as SeaChoice (seachoice.org), a rating system that classifies seafood based on the Monterey Bay Aquarium's criteria for a number of sustainability considerations. Unfortunately, few people seem to know about this system. As cottagers, it is a given that we care about our environment, and the more we can do to conserve it through our everyday actions, the better!

—SAMANTHA CROWLEY, VIA EMAIL

BEWARE OF DOGS

With regard to the Hall of Fame item "Eat Hot Dogs!" in "Best Summer Ever!" (Summer '15), I am stunned that the paragraph includes the phrase "kid friendly." Google "hot dogs and choking" and you will learn that hot dogs are a food which chokes both children and adults. First-aid courses include how to dislodge a choking item, such as a bite of a hot dog. Since there are so many accidents at cottages (and in the city) involving children, perhaps *Cottage Life* could always place safety first.

—BARBARA PURDY, UXBRIDGE, ONT.

COMING HOME

I have grown up living the cottage life on a tiny lake at my family's cottage in Bancroft, Ont. I have read tattered copies of *Cottage Life* since I wasn't even old enough to understand most of its content, but it seemed fitting for the environment, so I read it anyway. Summers consisted of bullfrogs, marshmallows, swimming, boat rides, and lifelong friends.



They just love to stew.

It truly was a magical time. As an adult, I appreciate different things at the cottage. Watching leaves turn in the fall, fog rolling across a glassy lake before sunrise, and a full moon over freshly fallen snow. I have always daydreamed of my own little cabin in the woods. This year, an opportunity arose. After a carefully mapped out two-hour road trip and a quick walk of the property, I knew it was the one. When I got home, my husband and I discussed when he could come and see it. "I don't need to see it, I trust you," he said. I insisted that he had to see it if we were to purchase it. He refused, reassured me of his faith in my choice, and told me to carry on with the process ...and so I did.

I have never been so excited for anything in my entire life. The cottage is south of Bancroft on a big, beautiful, healthy lake. I have started gathering items to take up with us, and the first thing I packed was my collection of *Cottage Life* magazines. At last, they will finally have a proper home. I can finally put the information to use at my own little piece of paradise. Thank you, *Cottage Life*, for being a part of my life for so long and keeping me inspired. All your hard work has paid off for this girl!

—M. & B. DUNCAN, VIA EMAIL

TAKE CARE OF YOUR LAND

We are charter subscribers to *Cottage Life* and still have every issue. This year will mark our 40th summer at our cottage near Barry's Bay, Ont., and we continue to be delighted by the trees, hills, water, rock, fresh air, seclusion, wildlife, visits from family and friends, and kinship with other cottagers. But we are finding in recent years that some landowners don't seem to understand the

impact of the things they plant on the land and the plants that they remove from the land. The things we do on the land, even though they may be well intentioned, can have serious negative long-term consequences for the water.

—AL BEST, BARRY'S BAY, ONT.

BEST OF THE WEST

I am an avid reader of your magazine and also I watch *Cottage Life* programming. We have a cottage in northern Ontario and our home is on Lake Huron. We live very close to the picturesque village of Bayfield. Your lack of coverage on Ontario's West Coast is a little disappointing. Grand Bend, Goderich, and Bayfield have beautiful homes, fabulous beaches, and great things to do.

—MARY ELLEN COOMBS, BAYFIELD, ONT.

A PICTURE-WORTHY POOCH

My mother-in-law has been reading *Cottage Life* religiously for as long as I have known her and she always talks about the magazine's photos of animals up at the cottage. She recently lost her dog to cancer and has taken it really hard. That being said, she is now even more focussed on our six-year-old golden-doodle, Gibson. She often mentions how he would be perfect for your magazine's pages, as he is absolutely obsessed with her cottage on Mississippi Lake in Carleton Place, Ont. I was hoping you could possibly find a way to include Gibson in one of your upcoming magazines.

—GREG LEBLANC, VIA EMAIL 🐶

We love your letters, comments, and photos. Email letters@cottagelife.com. (Don't forget to include your name and lake name.) **Note:** letters may be edited for clarity and length.



Gibson, in flight.

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I OVERCAME



THE WORST



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Cottage Life



Waterfront

MOMENT
**IN THE
RED**

Saturday, 4:00 p.m.
Get down with your bad selfies!
Folks record their berry good
time visiting Johnston's
Cranberry Marsh during
October's harvest.

Bala, Ont.





SEVEN UP

The MNRF's busiest district offices for bear complaints, to August 9th, 2015.

Kemptville (176)

North Bay (182)

Peterborough (192)

Timmins (204)

Parry Sound (291)

Sault Ste. Marie (409)

Sudbury (1,343)

SHELF LIFE

Fine print

His Whole Life
by Elizabeth Hay
(McClelland & Stewart, \$32)

Elizabeth Hay, a Scotiabank Giller Prize winner, explores how a cottage summer can fortify us against life's challenges. Jim, a troubled pre-teen from New York City, retreats to the Canadian woods, where he blossoms amidst the rites of passage familiar to all cottage kids: learning to drive on a dusty road, diving off high rocks, seeing a bear in the woods. Hay's writing, clear and revelatory, describes "the magic wand of the evening sun"; how "July gave the impression it would never end"; and why we, like Jim, experience "the miracle of the untouched summer place" each time we return to the lake. —Michelle Kelly

BEAR: MARY HEALE; BOOK: LIAM MCGAN

GOVERNMENT

THE BEAR FACTS

Despite all the furor over June's police killing of an errant black bear in suburban Newmarket, Ont., spring bear-related complaints to Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) were down 28 per cent this year—a full 560 calls off last year's pace.

The reduction comes as Ontario winds up its two-year experiment with a limited spring bear hunt around Timmins, Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, and North Bay. But Jim Johnston, who led Elliot Lake's successful municipal Bear Wise program to reduce conflicts with bears, doubts there's a connection between the hunt and fewer complaints. When it comes to problems between people and bruins, "there are so many variables, including food supplies," he

says. Healthy berry crops, for example, help keep bears in the bush. Johnston argues that hunting relatively small numbers of bears probably doesn't have a major impact on the behaviour of the whole population. Only 193 bears were taken during the 2014 spring season—a modest harvest compared with the 4,724 bears killed during the previous year's fall hunt or the average of 6,783 bears taken annually during the 1990s, before the cancellation of the controversial province-wide spring hunt in 1999.

Meanwhile, the ministry plans to evaluate the effectiveness of the new spring hunt once the results of the 2015 season are in. Jolanta Kowalski, spokesperson for the MNRF, says ministry scientists estimate Ontario's bear population at somewhere between 85,000 and 105,000 bears, a level that has been "generally stable over the past 20 years." —Ray Ford



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COTTAGE LOGIC

ANIMAL MYTHS

Some animals have a reputation for doing ridiculous things: a worm cut in two survives as two worms (no); a turkey will drown itself with rainwater (still no); cats steal the breath of babies (seriously? No). These are urban legends, not science. Let's bust a few myths about our cottagey creatures! —Jackie Davis



BATS DRINK BLOOD

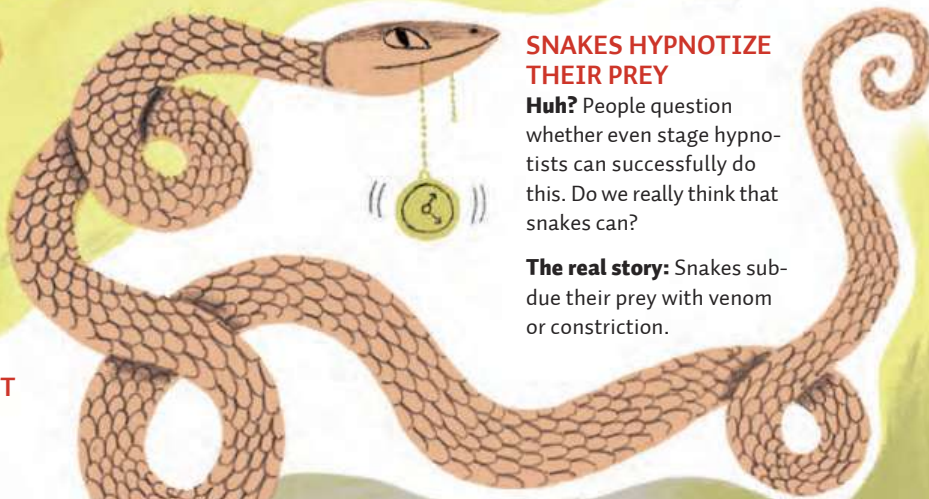
Well, vampire bats do. But they sure as heck can't turn anyone into a vampire. They also won't fly into your hair.

The real story: There are three species of vampire bats, and none is native to Canada. They feed on livestock and take only about a tablespoon of blood in one night.

TOADS GIVE YOU WARTS

No. Your boyfriend can give you warts. A toad cannot. (Warts are caused by a virus.)

The real story: Some toads—including North American species—secrete a chemical from their warty-looking bumps, and it can cause a skin rash. Other species secrete hallucinogenic neurotoxins. (Don't lick any toads, no matter how badly you want to get high. It's dangerous. And it's weird for the toad.)



SNAKES HYPNOTIZE THEIR PREY

Huh? People question whether even stage hypnotists can successfully do this. Do we really think that snakes can?

The real story: Snakes subdue their prey with venom or constriction.

PORCUPINES SHOOT THEIR QUILLS

Nope. The quills detach when touched.

The real story: Thanks to a barbed design, quills do easily penetrate skin (they need about half the amount of force as a hypodermic needle) and are very tough to remove.



OWLS ROTATE THEIR HEADS 360 DEGREES

Gah! Only Linda Blair can do that.

The real story: Owls can swivel their heads 270 degrees, thanks to a skeletal and blood vessel structure that allows them to twist their necks without causing damage to the arteries that lead to their brains.





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REPORTER

Sky watch, snake skin & boating bad

Those hazy memories Where there's smoke, there's fire. Somewhere. Turns out this summer's wildfires in Western Canada had an impact all the way into Ontario. Smoke particles drifted through the atmosphere to cause hazy skies and air-quality warnings thousands of kilometres away. The Ontario Lung Association issued a special advisory for anyone in the Great Lakes area with respiratory conditions. In July, the cloud over B.C. was so large that NASA satellites photographed it from space.

Matched by mycology Researchers from the University of Illinois have published a study reporting that a deadly fungus that affects wild snakes is closely related to the one that causes white-nose syndrome in bats. The snake fungus produces scabs, ulcers, abnormal moulting, and other skin and tissue changes, and affects species including the massasauga rattlesnake, the northern water snake, and the garter snake. Neither pathogen is new—both appear to have emerged in North America about a decade ago.

Ready to wear? In case you *still* need a reminder about PFDs, the Ontario Provincial Police have released stats from a 10-year tally of boating incidents and marine fatalities in the province. Only 50 of the 276 boaters who died over the last decade were wearing lifejackets or PFDs. "Sadly, many of the victims may have otherwise survived their ordeal had they chosen to wear this important life-saving equipment," says the OPP.

JOURNEYS

An island adventure

Where does a model go after a modelling job is done? Home, obviously. And if it's the Canada Builds model cottage, it goes to its new island home in Georgian Bay, Ont. The cottage—you may recall it from this year's Spring Cottage Life Show—was barged in two shrink-wrapped halves to its permanent site north of Honey Harbour over the span of two days, with appliances, HVAC, and fireplace intact.

Transporting two 13-tonne pieces of a building and then putting it together on an island involves trucks, cranes, and more than a dozen people, but it isn't outside the realm of regular contracting jobs. "We do something like this about once a year," says Armin Grigaitis of A&A Services & Marine Contracting, the company that did the work.

The only holdup? The threat of a storm on day one meant that the first section of the cottage spent the night in a sheltered bay. Better safe than capsized. "On Georgian Bay, the weather is very unpredictable," says Rob Graham of Canada Builds. "You just don't want to rock the boat too much. Pardon the pun." —J.D.

Check it: Another hot model cottage will be on display at the Fall Cottage Life Show, Oct. 23 to 25. Details at cottagelife.com.



Blipp the photo of the barge to see a video of the cottage en route





YOUR ROOM IS READY.



Making guests feel welcome at home or at the cottage is quite simple with a premium AeroBed®. AeroBed® products are a better night's sleep, the most comfortable way to turn any space into a guest room. The built-in AC pump inflates the bed easily, while the Whoosh® valve offers deflation in about a minute. Then it rolls up and stores compactly in a durable wheeled carry bag. AeroBed® delivers a level of luxury that's far beyond what you'd ever expect from an airbed.

The only question is, how long will your guests stay?



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BUYABLE

Throw on the towel

Washing the dishes at the cottage—family bonding activity or tedious, soggy chore? You be the judge! But at least those on Drying Detail can use this classy tea towel (\$9.95), part of the new Adventure Collection from LUprints and Ontario Parks. All items in the collection (including tote bags, Mason jar mugs, stickers, and stationery) are illustrated with cottagey flora and fauna and Canadian icons. Proceeds from the purchases are reinvested in the parks. For info: ontarioparks.com and luprints.com.



NUMBER CRUNCH

Be efficient!

The cold season is coming. Don't blow all your cash on heating.



70cm

BALLS TO THE WALL The average cottage loses energy through many tiny leaks, enough to add up to a hole the size of a basketball (about 70 cm in circumference)

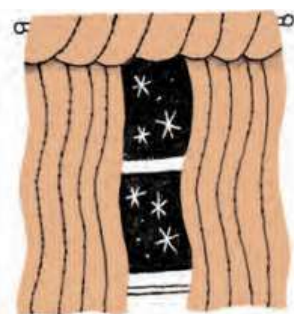


60%

THE BIG ONE 60 per cent of your energy bill goes to heating

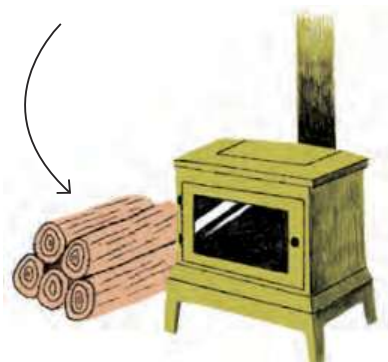
50%

NEW & HOT An updated, efficient woodstove uses 50 per cent less energy (which saves on wood)



25%

CLOSED FOR COMFORT Curtains can reduce window heat loss by up to 25 per cent



48x48

SHUT IT An open fireplace damper lets as much heat escape as a wide open 48" by 48" window (so close the damper when there's no fire)

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TRADITIONS

CLEAN LIVING

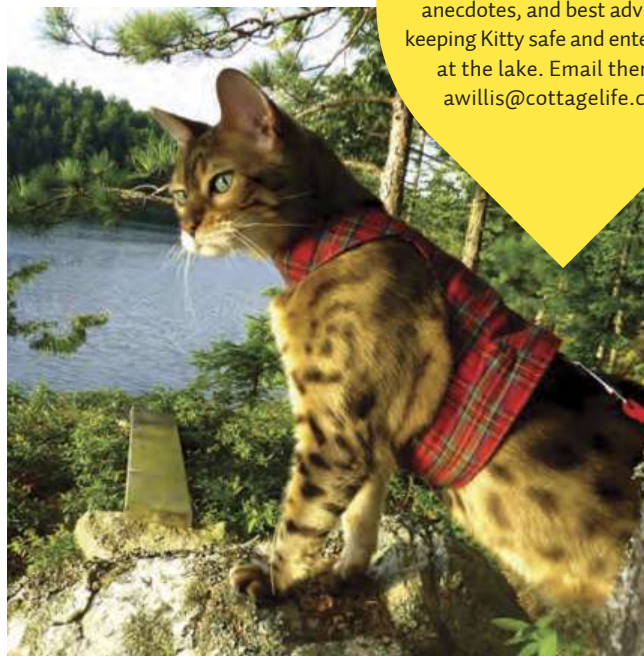
In 2011, we built our retirement home on a beautiful island in cottage country. To enjoy the view, we made certain there was plenty of glass. We then had the daunting task of keeping the more than 40 windows clean (we wanted all of our guests to have a perfect view of the river). So we came up with an idea: "Sure you can come up to the cottage," we say, "but you'll need to adopt a window." Each person or family that visits must clean a window, which becomes theirs. We take their photo, and place it in our guest book, along with their impressions from their visit. We send another photo and "adoption papers" to the "adoptive window parents," with the window's name and features, and a request for them to visit often.

We've had old and new friends visit. One couple sent hosta plants so that the view from their window would be more attractive. A good friend of ours found some mould on his windowsill, and saved us from much aggravation by noting that the closed blinds caused condensation. Most of our guests insist on cleaning their windows both inside and out. One couple visiting from Australia thrilled us by climbing our tallest ladder to tackle the triangular window near the roof.

Our guest book continues to grow. Not only is it filled with words and reflections, but also with photos of good friends. And clean windows. —Karen Allen

CAT CALL!

Do you take your cat to the cottage? Send us your photos, anecdotes, and best advice for keeping Kitty safe and entertained at the lake. Email them to awillis@cottagelife.com.



WHO KNEW?

MAKE IT BACON

Fire up the frying pan, folks! In July, researchers at the Hatfield Marine Science Centre in Oregon patented a new strain of edible sea algae. It's twice as nutritious as kale, plus it tastes like bacon.

PHOTOS: LEFT, PATRICK KRAMER; RIGHT, LIAM MOGAN. ILLUSTRATION: KALEY MCKEAN

ANSWER THE CALL OF ADVENTURE



Exciting, rugged,
unforgettable destinations, begging
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Life outdoors is full of twists and turns, steep drops, and bumps in the road. But it's also about chasing thrills, stopping suddenly for nature's miracles, and reaching breathtaking summits triumphantly. Journey forth on these spectacular Canadian outdoor adventures with freedom and confidence in Honda's all-new 2016 Pilot Touring. The outdoors is officially free rein.

B.C.'S SURF PARADISE

DESTINATION: TOFINO

LOCATION: WEST COAST
OF VANCOUVER ISLAND

CALLING CARD: BEST SURF
TOWN IN NORTH AMERICA

› Tofino puts you at ease with its laid-back vibe, but its rugged, pristine wilderness, dramatic winter storms, and year-round surfing will capture your heart and draw you back. Accessible by ferry from Vancouver and a three-hour drive northwest across the island, Tofino will entice you by more than its 35 km of temperate easy-access beaches. Breezes off the Pacific Ocean meet with steep coastal mountains and form majestic fogs that thread between 1,000-year-old cedars, spruces, and hemlock. Soon you'll find yourself venturing off into the ecologically diverse Clayoquot Sound, where you'll deeply satisfy your inner nature lover. Don't leave home without camping gear.



*The rear cargo fits more than you think!
Blipp it to see just how much*

LEAVE NO TRACE. You want to explore nature, not make a mark on it.

› **So, pack light.** Start with a list, and then cross off unnecessary items. Pack first what you will use last on the trip. Tie down bulky items on the roof. And remember to pack items in the cabin for the journey. Bonus: there's enough space in the rear cargo of the Pilot Touring to fit an 82-quart cooler with the third row seat up.

› **Choose an SUV with power and smarts.** Depending on driving conditions, the Pilot Touring's powertrain switches between six and three cylinders to help save on fuel. Plus, the 113-kilogram weight reduction, improved aerodynamics, and reduced running resistance of the vehicle further improve fuel economy, with ratings of 11L/100km of combined city and highway driving. ➤



ONTARIO'S FUN CAPITAL

DESTINATION: TOBERMORY

LOCATION: NORTHERN TIP OF THE BRUCE PENINSULA

CALLING CARD: SCUBA DIVING CAPITAL OF CANADA

➤ Put 300 km of road behind you heading northwest from Toronto and arrive in a mecca of unexpected adventure. Tobermory's quaint seaside town is the ideal starting place for endless fun—from shipwreck diving to scavenger hunts, camping, kayaking, and much more. Here you'll find the most spectacular section of the world-famous Bruce Trail footpath, where cliffs drop into the aquamarine shores of Georgian Bay. Search for a clue in the annual Adventure Passport scavenger hunt, plan for a day-long hike, and make time along the way to go diving in The Grotto cave, which features the bluest water in all of Ontario. Don't leave Tobermory without freshwater diving in the Fathom Five National Marine Park. You'll be wowed by underwater geological formations and the remnants of 20 historic shipwrecks.



Blipp the Pilot Touring to discover six features that make road trips better

REV UP THE COMFORT

You want to enjoy the journey as much as the destination.

- **Take turns driving.** Being a passenger is just as pleasurable as driving, especially in the Pilot Touring, since it recognizes two different driver's preferences and automatically adjusts for them. Also, the one-touch second-row seat moves out of the way, so there's no wrestling in and out of the back.
- **Detour at will.** Nothing like a deviation

from the expected to inject some excitement into a long drive. For all those rambling roadsters, the Honda Satellite-Linked Navigation System™ guides you with improved graphics, 3-D landmark displays, highway signs, speed limit display, arrival time, and lane guidance.

- **Ease into nighttime driving.** Start the engine remotely and count on the auto high beams—projector LEDs—to kick in when needed.



NFLD.'S BEAUTIFUL ULTIMATUM

DESTINATION: GROS MORNE NATIONAL PARK

LOCATION: WEST COAST OF NEWFOUNDLAND

CALLING CARD: UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE

› Driving Gros Morne—a geologically stunning outlying range of the Appalachians—is an unforgettable experience. It was here, after all, that geologists proved the theory of plate tectonics. Observe rough, prehistoric terrain, dense forests full of rare flora and fauna, ancient sea floors, and preserved ocean avalanches. You'll also be snapping photos of tiny seaside communities, freshwater fjords (deep, narrow lake drains), alpine-arctic bogs, barren lowlands, moose, and shorelines. For the bold-hearted, Gros Morne offers Canada's greatest backpacking adventure: the Long Range Traverse. This 3 ½-day course guarantees world-class scenery along the 800-metre-high mountain range, including awe-inspiring fjords, a disorienting landscape of tuckamore (impenetrable small trees), and numerous rock-covered plateaus. Prepare to push your navigation skills to the limit, using a compass and a map. There's no trail and GPS isn't reliable—it's just you and the outdoors at its most challenging. ●



EXPLORE WITH CONFIDENCE

You want to count on your ride to get you there safely.

› **Map it out.** Small roads in mountain ranges may not be represented on GPS. Before you hit the road, determine your route the old-fashioned way with a detailed map.

› **Pay attention.** Allow extra space between you and the vehicle in front of you along winding mountain roads and watch for wildlife. Benefit from the Pilot

Touring's many safety and driver-assistive technologies, such as the Collision Mitigation Braking System™, engineered to apply the brakes when it senses risk of certain collisions.

› **Enjoy the drive.** Don't sweat unexpected changes in terrain. The Pilot Touring's Intelligent Traction Management System switches between snow, mud, and sand settings. Bonus: steering-wheel mounted paddle shifters with electronic gear selector give you back the control.



See Better. The All-New 2016 Pilot Touring with Blind Spot Information System.



Workshop

KNOW-HOW

DRIER BY DESIGN

Oh, water, you ruin everything! How to build better so your stuff lasts longer >>

LIAM MCGAN

>> KNOW-HOW

Building for outdoor durability requires more than just choosing the right materials or applying a weatherproof finish. Smart design techniques will help any outdoor building project shed water and prevent the damage it can cause. —Michel Roy

Barriers

Sitting water wants to soak in, especially when it's on horizontal surfaces. Add a physical, waterproof barrier to protect the wood beneath.

- Deck beams and joists are prone to failure where water collects on top, in the gaps between deck boards. Apply a strip of adhesive waterproofing roof membrane before the deck boards go on, an easy step that will add years of durability.

- The tops of fence or railing posts have vulnerable end grain exposed to the weather. A wood, aluminum, or copper cap will help keep moisture out.

- Don't forget flashing in places where water can flow down a vertical surface to meet a horizontal one—at the top of a window, for example. Flashing will direct the water away from the vulnerable seam, over the flat wood, and on its way.

Control drips

Capillary action and surface tension allow rainwater to move uphill or across the underside of a horizontal surface. Saw a drip groove to break the water's path so that it falls away.

- A drip groove (1) is especially useful on the underside of a windowsill—it helps prevent water from staining the siding below.

Ventilation

Where two exterior surfaces meet, moisture collects. Add ventilation spaces to encourage airflow.

- Raise the bottoms of posts on feet (2), where possible, to allow air to flow underneath.

- A wall-mounted object, such as a deck ledger (3), will last longer if air can get behind it. Use water-resistant spacers for 1/4" or so of clearance.

Keep your feet dry

Water may fall from above, but it also seeps up from below. A barrier can protect the base of anything that touches the ground.

- The bottoms of the legs rot first on almost every picnic table. Add "shoes" of brass bar stock or plastic pads, attached with stainless steel or brass screws.

Rooftops everywhere

When building outdoors, look to your roof for guidance and incorporate rain-shedding slopes and angles in other places.

- Bevel the top of a horizontal handrail, so water doesn't sit.

- If you don't want to cap the top of a fence or a railing post, saw a slope (see p. 33 for design ideas).

- A deck or patio should not be perfectly level—slope it very slightly away from the building.

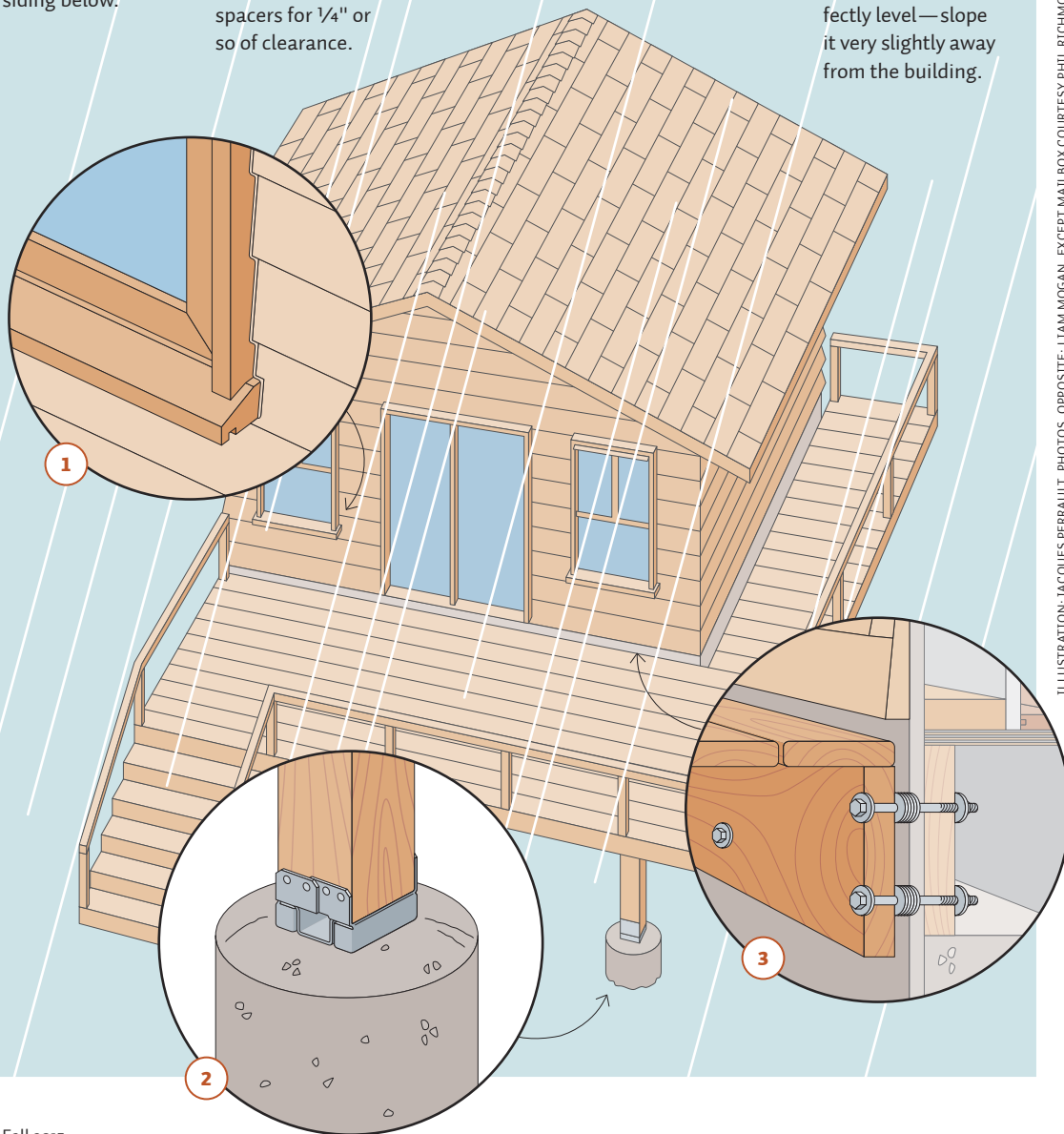


ILLUSTRATION: JACQUES PERRAULT. PHOTOS, OPPOSITE: LIAM MOGAN. EXCEPT MAILBOX COURTESY PHIL RICHMOND. CHAINSAW COURTESY HUSQVARNA



GREAT INVENTIONS

Letter carrier

At Phil and Hayley Richmond's cottage, old outboards never die; they just fetch the mail. After the Richmonds' previous mailbox was mugged by baseball bat-wielding yahoos eight years ago, Phil retrieved this vintage unit from a marina scrap heap. "It's a nostalgic touch," he says of the 5.5 hp Sea Horse. "We were always a Johnson family at the cottage." As a bonus, the cowling is hinged in the middle and secured by clasps on each side, making it easy to pop it off the engine. The mailbox conversion was almost as easy. Phil screwed a wooden base to the cowling, using old door hinges repurposed as brackets, and then lag-bolted the base onto a 4x4 cross arm. He keeps the weather out with a flap made from the door of his old, plastic mailbox, mounted on hinges (the hinges are secured inside the cowling with epoxy). Bondo body filler closes the gap between the cradle and the base of the outboard. Now the Sea Horse doubles as a beacon. "Our place is the one with the outboard," Phil tells visitors. —Ray Ford

Please tell us about your great invention!
Email edit@cottagelife.com

Need a little budget boost to build a greener, more energy-efficient cottage? NAIMA Canada, an insulation industry association, has an extensive online directory of rebates that you can apply for. Visit naimacanada.ca and click on "Incentives and Rebates."

CLOSING UP

Gas up for winter

About 90 per cent of small-engine problems are fuel related. Stop by any repair shop in spring and you'll see two-stroke (or two-cycle) chainsaws, blowers, mowers, trimmers, and so on, all waiting for service because they won't start or won't run properly.

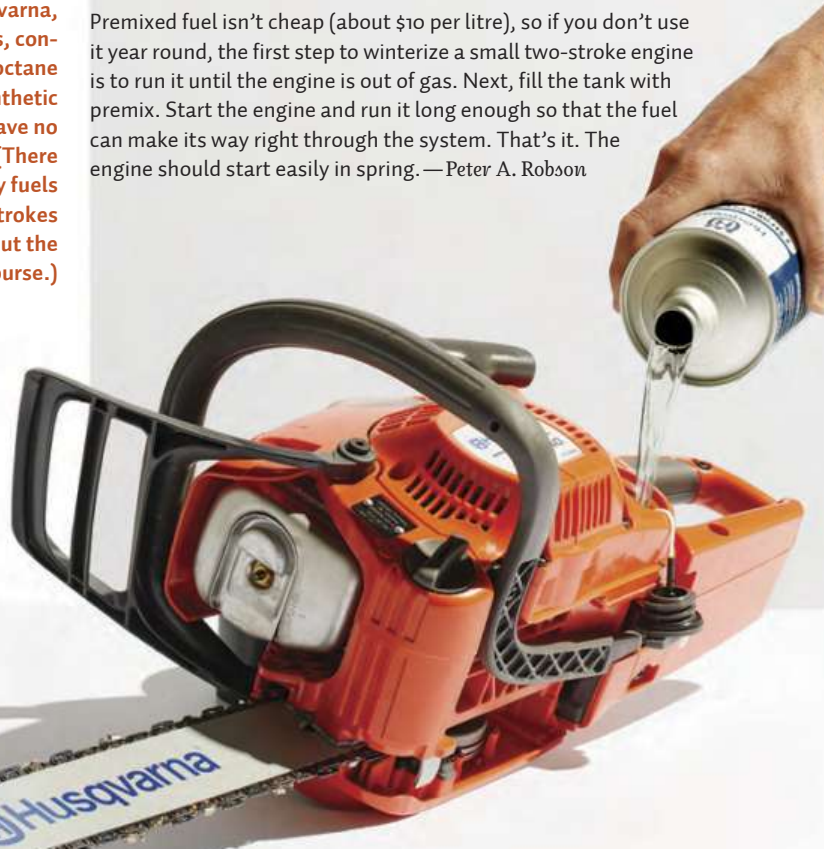
Even when an engine is run dry before winter storage, some fuel remains in the fuel lines and the carburetor bowl (if there is one). This gas mixes with air and moisture and deteriorates, leaving a gummy, varnish-like residue that can clog the carburetor.

You can avoid varnishing by leaving the fuel system full of stabilized gas over the winter. Problem is, pretty well all gas-station gasoline, regardless of grade, now contains ethanol in varying and inconsistent amounts. That ethanol is quick to separate and may attract moisture into the fuel. It can also destroy plastics and rubbers and make starting more difficult. While fuel stabilizer helps, it can't always be mixed accurately to counteract ethanol's negative influence.

Many experts now recommend using a premixed two-cycle specialty fuel for winterizing. Chad Dubois, the national technical manager for Stihl, says these products contain "built" fuel (not gasoline), which is more efficient and has none of the additives that cause gasoline to break down. "Premix," as it's sometimes called, needs no fuel stabilizer, despite having a long shelf life of two years or more.

Premixed fuel isn't cheap (about \$10 per litre), so if you don't use it year round, the first step to winterize a small two-stroke engine is to run it until the engine is out of gas. Next, fill the tank with premix. Start the engine and run it long enough so that the fuel can make its way right through the system. That's it. The engine should start easily in spring. —Peter A. Robson

Premixed fuels, sold under such brands as TruFuel, Stihl, Husqvarna, and others, contain high-octane fuel and synthetic oil but have no ethanol. (There are specialty fuels for four-strokes too, without the oil, of course.)



Blipp the chainsaw for more tips to protect your small-engine fuel system



MATERIALS

Master class in glass

Since the 1980s, “low-e” (for “low-emissivity”) glass has been the go-to product for cottagers seeking energy savings and a view. But not all low-e windows and doors are alike. Some help keep cottages warm in winter; others do a better job cooling in summer. Some help sea turtles get a good start. Which one is right for you?

How it works

A coating of metal oxides, just a few atoms thick, allows light through the glass but reflects other parts of the spectrum. Window performance differs depending on the metals used (including silver, nickel, and tin) and the number and placement of the coated surfaces.



Blipp the doors for Energy Star ratings of new windows and appliances

Here comes the sun

The important thing for cottagers is the amount of the sun’s heat allowed in. Low solar-gain (LSG) glass buffers the sun’s radiation, keeping the cottage from overheating. High solar-gain (HSG) lets warmth in, reducing heating costs.

The three-season cottage

“If you’re not heating the building in winter, moderate or low solar-gain glass is probably appropriate,” says Jeff Baker, technical consultant for Fenestration Canada, the industry association for window and door makers.

The year-round cottage

Reduce heating bills by opting for windows with high or moderate solar gain, suggests Reg Ayres, sales manager at Vinylguard Window & Door Systems in Woodbridge, Ont.

Large, south-facing windows

Prevent overheating with solar-control or triple-silver LSG glass.

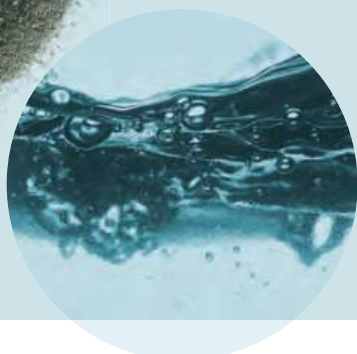
Mix and match

Maximize heat gain with HSG on the north and east sides of the cottage, while reducing late-day overheating with LSG glass on west and south.

Nighttime privacy

Turtle glass, developed to keep newborn sea turtles from being drawn to beachfront houses, allows only about 40 per cent of interior light to leave the building—enhancing privacy in open-concept, glass-walled cottages. —Ray Ford

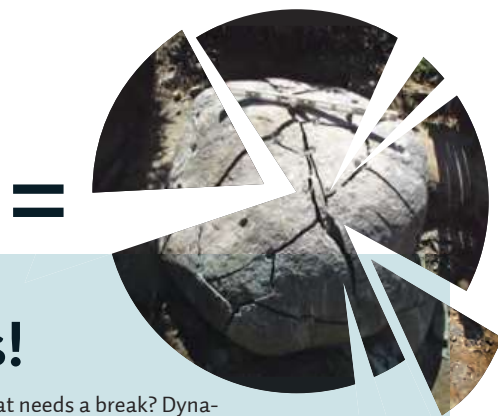
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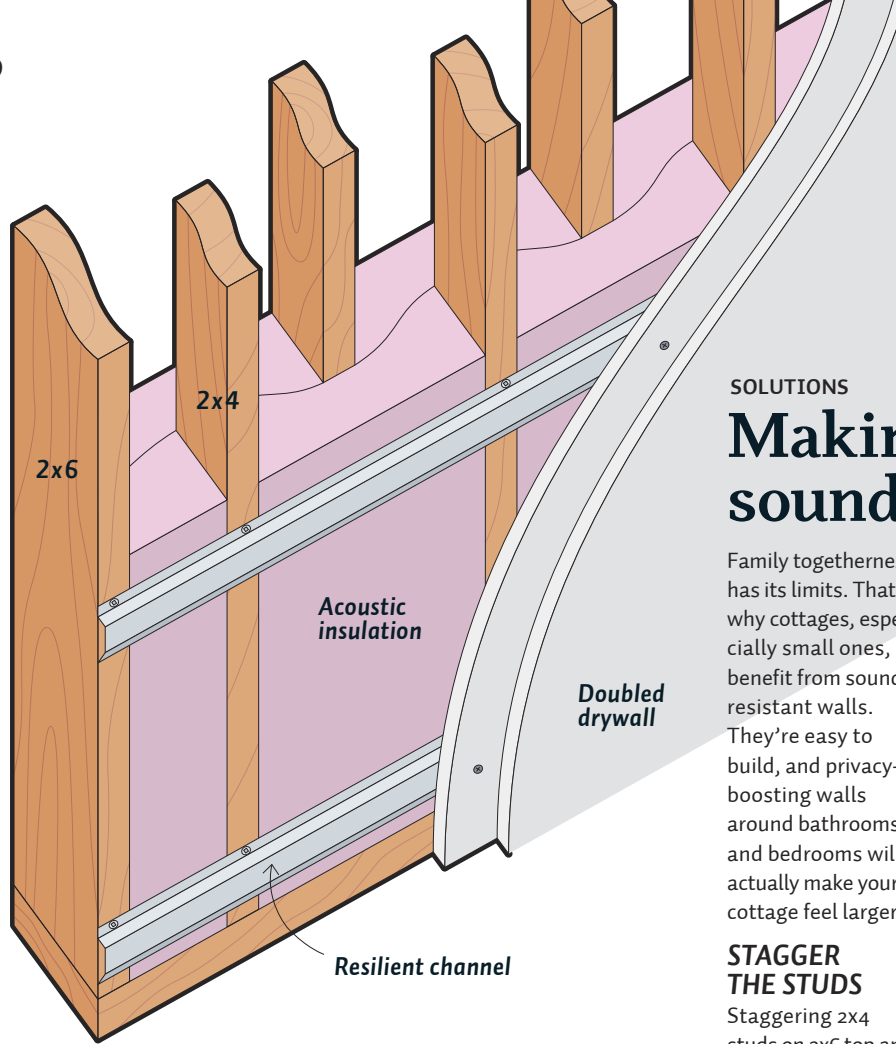
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SOLUTIONS

Making the sound barrier

Family togetherness has its limits. That's why cottages, especially small ones, benefit from sound-resistant walls. They're easy to build, and privacy-boosting walls around bathrooms and bedrooms will actually make your cottage feel larger.

STAGGER THE STUDS

Staggering 2x4 studs on 2x6 top and bottom plates will minimize sound conduction from one face of the wall to the other. Place the studs 24" on centre, on each side of the wall—that's one stud every 12".



top tip RESILIENT CHANNEL

Resilient channel—a folded sheet metal strip available at building-supply outlets—boosts sound resistance and can even be used, with a skin of new drywall, over an existing wall. Resilient channel fastens to studs with screws; drywall

fastens to the channel with screws too, but these screws don't go into the studs. The airspace created by the channel deadens sound transmission between drywall and framing. Use two layers of 5/8" drywall on resilient channel to quiet even your brother-in-law's snoring.

INSULATE THE CAVITY

Acoustic insulation is made to deaden sound, but standard thermal insulation batts are very effective too. Use batts meant for 2x4 construction, installed into each face of the staggered stud wall, before installing resilient channel and drywall.

SEAL THE WALL

Even tiny gaps transmit sound; use acoustic caulking, which never hardens, to seal between walls, floors, and ceilings. Seal the perimeter of the drywall as it goes up and avoid electrical boxes if at all possible. If you must install a box, apply spray foam to the outside of it before drywall goes on.

— Steve Maxwell

JOB JAR

Hot tub, clean conscience

Draining a hot tub is nobody's idea of bliss. Relax, planning ahead makes the chore easy on you and safe for the lake. Several days before closing up, stop adding disinfectant (or pull the chlorinator) and leave the tub uncovered, allowing bromine or chlorine to dissipate. Then check levels with a hot tub test kit, says Dave Lounsbury of All Hot Tub Repairs in Peterborough, Ont. If the litmus paper is bright green or blue, wait. If dull yellow, pull the plug.

Urban tubs usually get drained into a sanitary sewer, but that's rarely a cottage option. Dumping into the septic tank is a bad idea; you'll overload it and harm the tile bed. Instead, opt for percolation, not erosion. City of Kelowna water quality technician Desni Bachmann suggests draining onto deep, dry soil with lots of vegetation, in level areas away from the shore, ditches, creeks, and buildings. Let the water trickle over a few days, moving the hose if water starts to pool or run off. — Ray Ford

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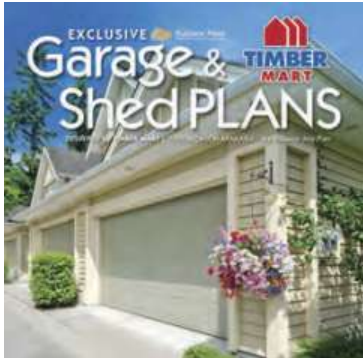
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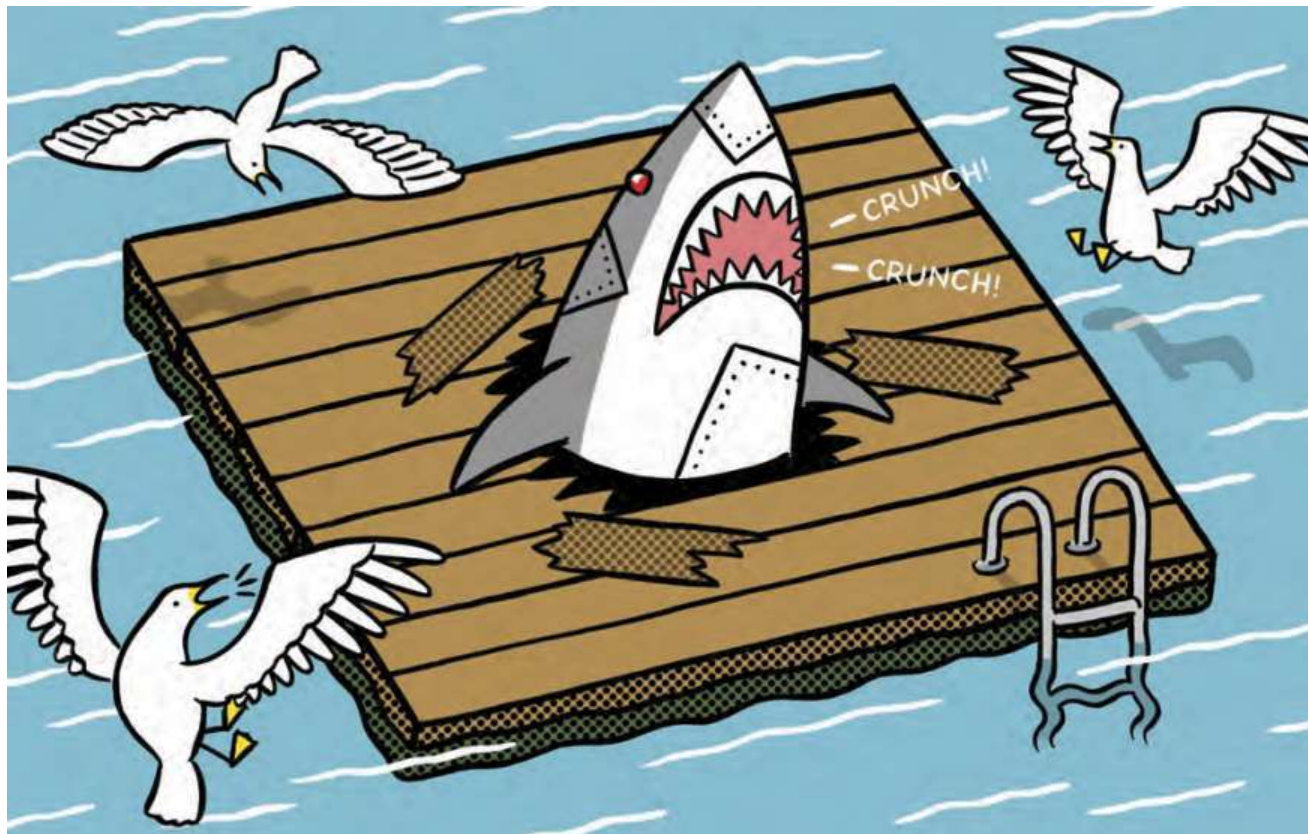


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Bird busting, buyout basics & tank talk

By Jackie Davis

SEAGULLS have taken over our swim raft, despite our snake and owl decoys and fluttering reflective tape. Any other tips? —COMPLETELY GULLED

Here's the thing: the seagulls are not stupid. They can tell the difference between a real threat and your simple trickery. Inanimate and even fluttering objects usually don't work, or, if they do, "they might work for about an hour," says Andy Willmott, the owner of B.C.'s Lake Country Pest Control. You can't vary your gull-deterrenting devices every hour. And you can't permanently install a true threat—a live border collie, a master falconer—on the raft. But you *can* make it less hospitable for the birds. Willmott recommends that you check out the retailer Bird B Gone. "There's no silver bullet, but there are a variety of devices out there," he says, including wires, nets, and sticky "bird gels" that feel yucky on their feet. His pick: the Bird Spider, a base with stainless steel "arms" that rotate, knocking the birds

off the raft if they try to use it. (A deterrent with actual consequences is more effective than a pretend predator.)

According to research by Transport Canada, "habitat modification" through physical barriers is one of the most effective methods for long-term bird control. So you could block the perimeter of the raft, dry-style. Dan Frankian of Hawkeye Bird and Animal Control in Toronto suggests placing six-foot-tall peaked posts on each corner of the raft, with taut fishing line strung in a 12" by 12" grid between them. (Leave one side open, or a gap where the ladder is located, for swimming access.) Will this prevent the gulls from using your raft? Hopefully. Will this prevent *you* from using your raft? Perhaps. Another trick from Frankian: rig the raft with an air compressor tank that would let you control the buoyancy, and submerge the raft underwater by a couple of centimetres when you're not using it. (Swim rafts must meet Transport Canada's visibility standards, so check these rules first.) "That's what I do to mine," he says. "The birds are not going to sit on it if they can't sit on it."

WHERE ARE all the salamanders? I used to spot lots when I was a kid, but I haven't seen any in years. Is it just me? —AMPHIBIOUSLY ANXIOUS

It's not just you. "I give talks all over the place, and, without fail, I get those precise comments: 'I used to see them all the time, and now I just don't,'" says Karen R. Lips, a researcher

with the University of Maryland. “It’s a real thing.” While salamanders may move out of a particular area because of a local change—such as more predators or less shoreline vegetation—the grim truth is that their numbers are dropping pretty much everywhere. The same goes for all amphibians. “Amphibians are very sensitive to their environment and are often referred to as ‘canaries in the coal mine’ when it comes to environmental degradation or change,” says Andrea Gielens, a B.C.-based wildlife biologist with Wildlife Preservation Canada.

In some cases, there are clear, specific causes for the worldwide disappearances. The Lao newt, for example, has been overharvested for the pet trade, and the Mexican axolotl has been nearly wiped out because of pollution and habitat loss. But in other cases, the reasons are hard to pinpoint. By the 1980s, there was a wide-ranging decrease in salamanders in the Appalachian Mountains, a hot spot of salamander diversity, with no obvious cause. Climate change probably plays a role, says Lips, but “it always comes across as mysterious because we don’t see it happening.”

Make your property salamander-friendly by keeping the lake clean and encouraging aquatic vegetation. And if you see one, don’t move it. Once spotted, they’re not hard to interact with. They won’t fly away or claw your face off. “There is so much to be learned from these interactions, which is great,” says Gielens. “We just want people to leave the animals where they found them.”

I PLAN TO buy out a family member’s half of the cottage. If we’ve agreed on the price, do we need to involve a lawyer?
—A TITLE SEEKER

Legally? Quite possibly, depending on your province. The land transfer and title system varies throughout Canada, but in many places a non-lawyer can’t even access the electronic registration system. Plus it’s just a good idea. “I’d always use a real estate lawyer,” says Monique Shebbeare, a lawyer in Vancouver. “First of all, they know how to do all the paperwork properly. But, equally important, they’ll know if there are any hazards or pitfalls to watch out for.” Someone with a background in real estate and title transfers can prepare you for the impact

the sale will have on taxes. “People don’t always understand the implications of what they’re doing,” says Shebbeare. “And what you don’t know *can* hurt you.”

When it comes to cottage succession planning, getting expert help early is worth the time and money. “Ultimately, you want to bulletproof everything as much as possible,” says Suzana Popovic-Montag, a managing partner with Hull & Hull in Toronto, who specializes in estates and trusts and has seen cottage sharing go pear-shaped: shouting matches, courtroom battles, decade-long family rifts. “We’ve made a whole career out of family squabbles.”

You didn’t ask, but Peter Lillico, a lawyer with Lillico Bazuk Galloway Halka in Peterborough, Ont., also points out that even if you and your family member have agreed upon a price, getting an appraisal is a smart move. Why? Assuming the cottage isn’t the seller’s principal residence, for tax purposes he or she must report the sale to the Canada Revenue Agency as a disposition of taxable Canadian property at “fair market value.” The way to reliably determine that number—and the associated capital gains tax—is through an appraisal, says Lillico. “The CRA will not give a slap of a beaver’s tail what price has been agreed upon within the family.”

WE HAVE a large dining room. How can I put in a temporary structure that will allow me to cut off half the room so I don’t have to heat the whole thing?
—SPATIALLY CHALLENGED

Sticking a new structure in there sounds complicated. And unnecessary. But sectioning off part of the room and heating only that space is totally doable.

How much money and effort do you want to spend on this project? Options range from simple and visually appealing (thermal curtains hung from a rod) to simple and ugly (thick plastic) to more labour-intensive but still decent looking (building a temporary wall with a series of structural insulated panels). A basic SIP is rigid foam (such as extruded polystyrene) sandwiched between some kind of sheet material (such as panelling or beadboard). The sheets extend beyond the foam to create flanges for screws to attach one SIP to another, or to 2x4s. You could screw the

2x4s to the floor, ceiling, and walls and then slide the SIPs in place.

The problem with a temporary solution is that it’s...temporary. And since curtains offer no vapour barrier, you could get frost and eventually mould (don’t hang any luxury brocade). As an attractive and multi-use option, architect Dale Parkes, a senior lecturer at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, B.C., recommends a set of well-insulated double swing doors. These could split the dining room in two whenever you want. “You can order them in many sizes from almost any hardware store,” says Parkes. And if you’re handy, you can install them yourself.

Check with your building department. A curtain won’t require a permit, but constructing a temporary wall may.

AT THE lake, we have an underwater septic tank connected to a boathouse. How often is the tank to be inspected? By whom?
—SEPTIC STUMPED

An underwater what now? At Cottage Life we had never heard of such a thing. Based on the info in your question, even the pros aren’t clear on what you’re describing. Sandy Bos, a building inspector with the Township of Muskoka Lakes, suspects that you’re referring to a pump chamber housed in a concrete vault. Dale McLure of the Alberta Onsite Wastewater Management Association wonders if you might have something similar to a tank that stores the sewage under a floating home or a houseboat. No matter the exact purpose of this submerged chamber—hey, maybe it contains a secret control room, like the one on *Lost!*—the laws about inspecting it and how often will depend on your location. (As for maintenance, the typical guideline for ordinary septic tank pump-out is every three to five years, depending on usage.) “Start with your local government agency,” advises John Rowse, the executive director of the B.C. Onsite Sewage Association. If you think something’s wrong with the set-up—you don’t want this thing’s contents to leak—“get a local septic expert to have a look,” he suggests. “A local would be familiar with the laws of your jurisdiction.” 🐸

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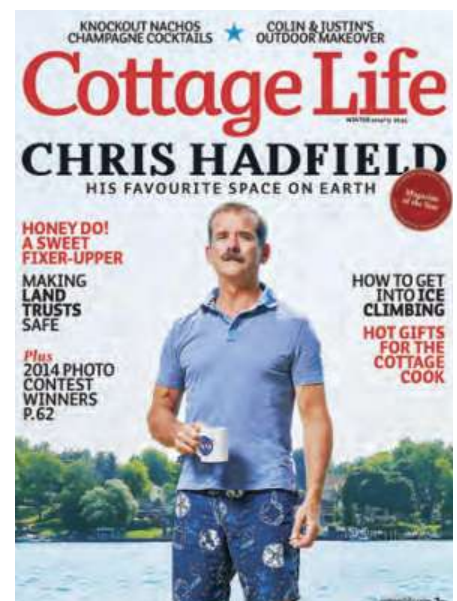
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Faded snapshots? Scrapbooks? Nah. Zim remembers his cottage glory days with a far more primitive device

The nose knows

By David Zimmer

The bugs in my corner of cottage country were so bad this year that for the first time ever, we had to burn mosquito coils inside the house. I know that the package says the coils should never be fired-up indoors, but how else are they supposed to do their deadly job? What's the point of laying down a ground-fog of lethal smoke outdoors when the blood-sucking insects are in the kitchen? This has always baffled me. So I did it the proper way and soon had mossies dropping like, well, flies. I also experienced another benefit: after just one whiff of

that noxious perfume, I time travelled to the cottage of my childhood. It was a hot summer night and our big kitchen table was crowded with card players. Mosquitoes whined at the screens, but inside we were protected within a thick cloud of toxic smoke from cigarettes and a half dozen smouldering coils. Grown-ups had stubby bottles of Carlsberg and Molson Golden. The kids drank low-budget Carlton Club cola. Everybody ate low-budget Ann Page cheesies and smeared greasy orange powder on the cards. Good times.

That scene isn't new to me, because any time I smell a mosquito coil, it triggers a memory of our family cottage as it was in my childhood. It doesn't matter if I'm at a backwoods fish camp in Quebec or an expat bar in Cambodia, one slight hint of that pesticidal smoke and I am instantly at the cottage.>>



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IN LIKE ZIM

{Continued from page 45}

A non-scientific canvass of friends and acquaintances indicates that when it comes to associative memory, or whatever you want to call this olfactory brain thingy, the cottage experience is powerful and prominent. When I asked non-cottagers what the smell of mothballs made them think about, almost everyone said something like “old-lady sweater” or “Grandma.” One said, “scary closet.” The cottagers, as you may have guessed, all said mothballs smell like opening-up time at the lake.

In the movie *Apocalypse Now*, Robert Duvall’s character, Lieutenant Colonel Bill Kilgore, loves the gasoline smell of napalm in the morning. It smelled like... victory. This is an often-quoted bit of dialogue, but never has a line so perfectly summed up my emotions when it comes to the particular fragrance of two-stroke engine exhaust. To my nose and my brain, that delicious reek of unburned hydrocarbons is a one-way ticket to cottage country. And it really does smell like victory, because a blue cloud of two-stroke exhaust signifies serious cottage fun. Offensive to some, that petroleum patchouli recalls my first outboard, a maroon 5.5 hp Johnson, and a succession of others that let me bomb around the bay with the kind of absolute freedom that kids just don’t get in the city. Two-stroke exhaust also represented the first rule of Cottage Manly Arts: gas-powered tools shall be used to transform work into play. It spewed from the enormous old Homelite chainsaw I could barely lift and the weed whacker whose instructions were printed entirely in Japanese (it was an early model). To this day, when I smell two-stroke exhaust, I know in my bones that good times are just around the corner.

While some forms of the olfactory brain thingy are almost universal (think campfires and cedar), others vary widely according to the individual. For instance, my cottage smell associations are generally positive—pine sap and wet rock and lilac bushes—but this is not the case for everyone. When I told my friend Barb that my top two cottage smells were kerosene lamps and bacon grease on a wood-fired cookstove, she said her top

two this year were mouse piss and Febreze. My editor at *Cottage Life* was somewhat embarrassed to report that the most enduring scent memory of her family cottage is the ever-so-faint pong of sewage, courtesy of the holding tank located directly under the back guest bedroom. (A brilliant cottage innovation, if you ask me.)

Beauty, apparently, is in the sinus of the beholder. I once went into a long-abandoned outbuilding with a friend. As soon as we cracked open the door, the smell of overheated pine boards, dust, and tarpaper transported me to my hill-top sleeping cabin. To me, it was one of the best smells in the world and I told my friend the same. He thought it just smelled like a dirty old shed. This got me thinking. Many of the smells I most closely associate with the cottage are those of age and entropy, the musty, dusty smells of an old frame building. How does it work for people with brand new cottages? Do new smells count or does smell memory have to be old and worn? Somehow I doubt a snootful of oriented strand board or drywall primer has the power to transport anyone to the lake. But who knows?

Perhaps the strangest thing about the olfactory brain thingy is that smell association persists even when the object to which it is connected is long gone. To this day, the smell of traditional spar varnish and turpentine delivers me to the cottage and the wooden boats we’re always fixing up. Except we aren’t, because those boats, worn and rotten, were burnt long ago. The mildewed smell of old books still takes me to the cottage and our collection of postwar hardcovers and ancient copies of *National Geographic* that don’t physically exist anymore. And the smell of wet canvas reminds me of the enormous tarps and tents that were delivered unto the dump when I was about 18 years old. Given all this, it would probably be fair to argue that the olfactory brain thingy is a totally inaccurate form of memory. Then again, perhaps that is its greatest appeal. We can always use our other senses to see things as they really are. Black and white. Just the facts, ma’am. But by simply following your nose, you can remember things as they once were. Which, at a cottage with a long history, is sometimes better. 🐾

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Screen with envy

Colin and Justin add on a stylin' sun porch

**Build
it!**



By Colin McAllister & Justin Ryan

PAUL ORENSTEIN

We're all familiar with the phrase "bang for your buck." We love things that serve double duty: a sofa that becomes a guest bed, an ottoman with hidden storage, or a screened porch addition that increases the perceived scale and architectural balance of a structure while still connecting us to the outdoors—without the worry of bugs or weather. A cottage without a screened area (or a "sitooterie," in Scottish parlance) is like a canoe without water. When it came time to consider adding one as part of our cottage revamp, there was no debate. >>

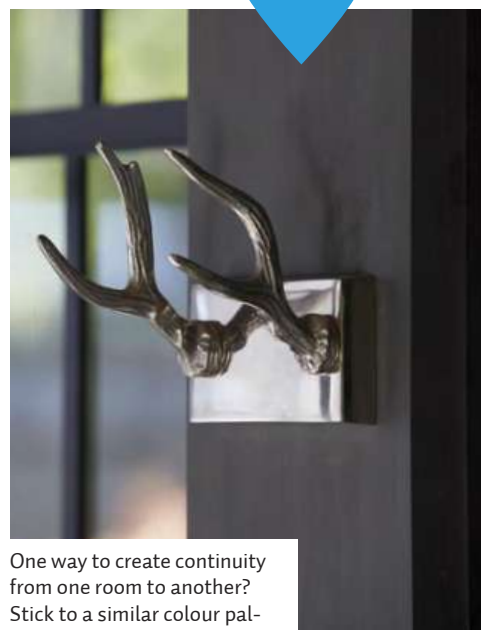
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Start in the right spot

Before embarking on any addition, ask yourself some key questions. How big should the addition be? Where is the best place for it? How might it blend in with the original building? Appraising our cottage's original shape, we could have popped a screened porch at the front. Aye, it would have worked as an additional sitting room, but it would obscure the view from the main house. Attached on the left side of the cottage, as viewed from the lake, it would have been too close to the trees. The resultant dark, moody aesthetic? No, thank you. We wanted a sunroom, not a gloom room. Optimal position? How about to the right, at the bottom of the drive? Bingo! Positioned to make the most of summer breezes, the space would provide an ideal anteroom to the existing living room. Best of all, it would be perfectly located to bask in the glory of the sun as it sets over beautiful Drag Lake. We followed the sunlight to see where it lands at the end of the day, and the sweet spot that previously housed a rickety deck was clearly the best place.



One way to create continuity from one room to another? Stick to a similar colour palette. Colin and Justin chose varying tones of brown and grey, with the occasional use of red for a hit of energy.

Create a solid plan

Working through ideas with Jodanne Aggett at Haliburton Timber Mart made life easy. Jodanne, you see, has first-hand knowledge of the area, and, as we always say, local knowledge is power. A grasp of how long the township takes to respond to queries, an existing relationship with the planning department (to ask questions personally rather than rely on endless emails), and knowledge of what's allowed in the municipality all made Jodanne a valuable asset.

Next we met with Discovery Dream Homes. We settled on room size: enough space for a sofa and chairs and a generous ceiling height of at least eight feet. We also wanted an exposed, chunky timber frame, to create a feeling of solidity and permanence inside, and a peaked cathedral roofline to echo the shape of the main house from the exterior.

Always consider how your cottage addition will look from the lake. Ours created a much different shape that increased the front profile by approximately 50 per cent. The cottage looks bigger from the water but not overwhelmingly large. The porch's grey Cape Cod siding matches the main house, and, combined with the same window

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Console counsellors

Always with an eye on the budget, we hit the thrift store in Haliburton and found a 1970s-style metal-framed console table—a snip at \$40. To bolster its appeal, we removed the laminate top, partially sanded the

painted frame, and then topped it off with two scaffold planks, sanded and stained by our own fair hands. And presto: a lovely new piece of furniture—the talking point of our new look in the screened porch.



style and roof shape and shingles, creates a virtually seamless integration. This deep shade of grey modernizes the look *and* blends into the trees—sophisticated and understated.

Having installed the Sunspace Weathermaster screen system in our previous cottage, we decided to do the same again, only this time we also included a set of bifold doors to fully open up the room. All the windows have bug screens to keep out insects and clear vinyl panels to keep rain and snow at bay. The doors give us an option to fold back the entire wall to embrace the great outdoors.

Work double duty

The room functions not just as a screened porch but also as the entrance to our cottage—a place for guests to drop their bags and remove their shoes, which is especially necessary in winter. A granite floor will stand up to the perils of water, and handsome coat hooks provide a place to hang gear out of the way. With the build complete, like heat-seeking missiles in flip-flops we headed to the shops to find the best accessories. Black tubular sconces, an overhead fan, a wicker-framed sofa, and a few woven occasional chairs give this room high style.

Our new screened porch is an integral piece in our domestic puzzle. It's a summer sitting room and a winter mudroom that enhances the size and beauty of our cottage whatever the season. To think, all that *and* it keeps the bugs out. 🐸

WHERE TO FIND IT

Contractor, Randy Blain Construction; timber frame construction, Discovery Dream Homes; windows, Euro Vinyl; screen system, Sunspace; screen installation, Nortech; granite floor, Van Dyk Stone; sofa, chairs, and coffee table, Artemano; planning assistance and building supplies, Haliburton Timber Mart; siding, Cape Cod; fan, The Fan Shoppe; wall lights, Home Depot.



Blipp the table above for DIY details and for more video of C&J building their screened porch

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**THE SAVVY
HOW TO BUILD
A COTTAGE
COMPENDIUM
YOUR COMPLETE
GUIDE TO START
FROM SCRATCH
STRATEGIES FOR
BUILDING A
DREAM RETREAT**

**Build
it!**

By Kim Pittaway Illustration Graham Roumieu



F

First there's the dream: the cottage by the lake's edge, its expanse of windows perfectly framing another gorgeous sunset as family laughter echoes across the water. Then there's the reality: the cottage quite a few feet farther from the water's edge because of setback restrictions, windows smaller so that the living room stays cooler—still, all things considered, a lovely setting for a family get-together. And sometimes there's the nightmare: the cottage still not finished because you've fired your contractor, the sunset not as appealing through windows that leak or are fogged, the budget skyrocketing—and family sounds more along the lines of “Whose idea was building a cottage anyway?”

Dreams are great, and reality can be just fine—but it's the nightmares you want to avoid. Our how-to-build-a-cottage guide will help you do just that, exploring the areas that you should consider as you plan your dream retreat. Think things through and you could end up much closer to your dream than you expected, while heading off potential nightmares before they get a chance to keep you up at night.

START WITH THE THREE Ws

Why do you want a cottage? Where do you want to build? And who will be using the cottage? Those are the questions that Randy Blain of Randy Blain Construction in Huntsville, Ont., advises people to ask at the outset of a cottage project. Blain, who worked with Colin McAllister and Justin Ryan on the second season of the Cottage Life channel's *Cabin Pressure*, says, “The more information people come to me with, the better.” How often are you going to use the cottage? Does your passion for water sports mean you'll spend more on your dock and gear storage, or is outdoor entertaining—think covered cooking and dining spots, a stone firepit, lots of room for deck seating—key?

Of course, budget matters too, although being realistic about what you might get for that budget is tough for most people, says Adam Thom of the Toronto full-service architecture firm Agathom. “You can't just look a budget up on the Internet, and you can't rely on what friends say they've spent, because friends don't often tell the full truth about costs.” Still, there are some rough rules of thumb. For a frame cottage with a shingle roof and a septic system, costs will typically come in at \$200 to \$300



ARE YOU ALLOWED TO BUILD A BOATHOUSE? A DOCK? WHAT SETBACKS ARE THERE?

per square foot, though there are many variables. If you want to be off-grid, you can add 20 per cent for extra infrastructure, such as a solar power system, a generator, or a well, says the Vancouver architect Mark Osburn of Osburn/Clarke, and if your site is accessible only by boat, helicopter, or float plane, add 30 per cent or more. Also keep in mind that site accessibility challenges will add time to your build: a water-access island cottage will take longer to build than one on the mainland.

Thom's advice? Start with a one-page summary of what activities you want to happen at the cottage that will affect the use of space: family weekends, alone time, dinners on the deck. What are your must-haves? "Sometimes people don't know how many bedrooms they want, but they may say, 'I'll die if we don't have a screened porch'—and that's important information for me to have." Collect clippings of ideas, fixtures, and finishes you like, and then sit down with a professional to talk it through.

Recognize that even the most generous budget won't get you around local building regulations. "People come in on holiday, buy a lot, and phone me and tell me what they are going to do, and I say, 'Good luck,'" says Steve Walker, the building inspector for B.C.'s Columbia Shuswap Regional District. "One of the biggest problems I see is that people don't check with the local government prior to purchasing or making plans." His advice: investigate what's allowable before you buy and look into property titles, rights of way, and easements so that you don't end up with a property that doesn't suit your dreams. What setbacks are required from property lines and water? How close can your septic be to the shoreline, and what size septic is required? Are you allowed to build a boathouse? A dock? Also make sure you have a properly surveyed site, says Blain. "If you build a foot too close to the high-water mark because the site wasn't accurately pinned, you're in trouble."

TEAMWORK

"You can have the greatest plan in the world, and then because you're not working with the right person, it all goes south," says general contractor Dave Depencier, host of *Reno My Reno*. "Do your homework and find the right people to work with." Consider a local builder, since they'll be familiar with the bylaws and particular building challenges in your area. Thom suggests researching architecture firms online and then interviewing some to find the appropriate architect. "It's a big decision. Don't just go with your sister's friend. Find someone who is really attuned to you."

A SOLID FOUNDATION

Your site will influence the type of foundation you opt for, but getting a foundation solidly footed below the frost line can be a challenge. In the Canadian Shield and other rocky regions, you may be able to pin the foundation to solid bedrock. In cases where you've got boulders rather



than solid rock, “you’ll have to blast to get a four-foot foundation so it doesn’t heave,” says Jason Lake, host of *Decks, Docks & Gazebos* and the owner of Jason Lake Construction. And while the phrase “built on sand” is often used to suggest something that doesn’t have a solid foundation, in fact, sand and sandy soil can be the easiest of all to work with, since it generally drains well. Excavating below the frost line in sandy soil is also simpler—unless you hit hardpan. “It’s compressed sand. It’s like concrete,” says Lake. “It’s awful.” And when you’re paying an excavator \$150 an hour, it can be awfully expensive too. Lake once resorted to videotaping an excavation that hit hardpan because he worried that the clients—who weren’t on-site—wouldn’t understand how much labour and time were required to get through it. Another option is to build on concrete block piers on top of concrete-filled Sonotubes that are pinned to solid rock or that go below the frost line.

Whether you intend to use your cottage year round will also influence your choice of foundation. A pier construction or an unheated crawl space can mean cold floors in winter. Vermin are another consideration. “Otters and mink love to crawl up under buildings built on piers, and they set up shop, smell, and create a big mess,” says Vancouver’s Osburn. Accessibility of the building site can also be a factor. “Pouring concrete may be too expensive at remote sites, so we’re also using screw-pile technology,” he says. The steel screw-in piling is used as an anchor system for deep foundations and is particularly suited for areas without large rocks.

One note of caution: simply “building to code” may not be enough, says Blain. “The code may say you need a four-foot frost wall, but if you’re doing that in blue clay and the wind is coming off the lake and there’s no snow cover, the frost will go down farther than four feet and your cottage will heave.” His recommendation? Get expert advice—from a contractor who is familiar with local conditions, for instance—on what your site in your location requires.

ABOVE AND BELOW

Your foundation choice will also depend on whether or not you build a basement. Do you need the additional below-grade space? Are you building on a slope? If you’re going to dig and pour a foundation for a crawl space, perhaps it’s worth the extra cost to add a full basement and gain more useful square footage, says Depencier. “You still have to dig, you still have to form, you still have to pour,” he says. “It may make sense to pay for three or four extra feet of concrete for what you get in return.” If you’re in an area with a high water table, though, building inspector Walker suggests you give a basement a pass. “I wouldn’t be going seven feet underground if I was worried about water.” Not sure about the water table in your area? Walker suggests asking long-time residents of the area. While a sump pump can keep a wet basement dry, Walker points out that it only does so as long as the pump doesn’t break down or lose power—both of which are more likely to happen in an untended cottage.

WINTER WHITE OR SHUT UP TIGHT?

Will your home away from home be a three-season retreat or four-season getaway? “A non-winterized cottage can be a really light building, just a skin over a frame,” says Thom. “I love the opportunity to do them, but most people now opt for winterized, even if they aren’t there in the winter.” Choosing to build a four-season cottage will affect your foundation choice and the placement of



plumbing lines, and it will add to costs for windows, doors, insulation (you'll need higher R-value ratings), and heating systems. Three-season cabins, says Thom, are simpler to build, but there is another level of detail to deal with since the exposed structure means you have to pay more attention to the quality of the materials and the layout of the studs, and you can't cover up your work if you don't put up drywall. There also aren't as many structures that can conceal electricals and other necessities. So, there may not be a significant difference in costs between a three- and a four-season cottage at the building stage, but a four-season cottage has higher year-round running costs if you need to keep the cottage heated throughout the winter. Deciding to winterize *after* you've built, however, will cost much more.

HEATED DISCUSSION

It's not a cottage if there isn't wood heat; that's the opinion of contractor Randy Blain. Still, he doesn't think wood should be your primary heat source. For four-season cottages in Ontario, he recommends a propane furnace or a geothermal system. In some areas of the country, a natural gas furnace is an option as well. If you're on the grid, consider an electric furnace or baseboards. Electric heating is not expensive to install, but utility costs can add up. Osburn says that wood alone can be more than sufficient for a



A THREE-SEASON COTTAGE IS SIMPLER TO BUILD, BUT MAY COST YOU JUST AS MUCH

three-season cabin in B.C.: “A wood-stove for heat and a fireplace for vision.” Geothermal systems installed at the time of the build, or heat pumps installed later, can also work depending on your location. Another alternative for those on the coast is a thermal loop, or thermal mat, heating and cooling system, which, similar to a geothermal system, uses the temperature of the ocean to heat in the winter and cool in the summer. The price varies depending on the size of the system. Osburn’s advice: “Watch your payback time. Anything over 25 years makes no sense.”

HEADING OFF THE GRID

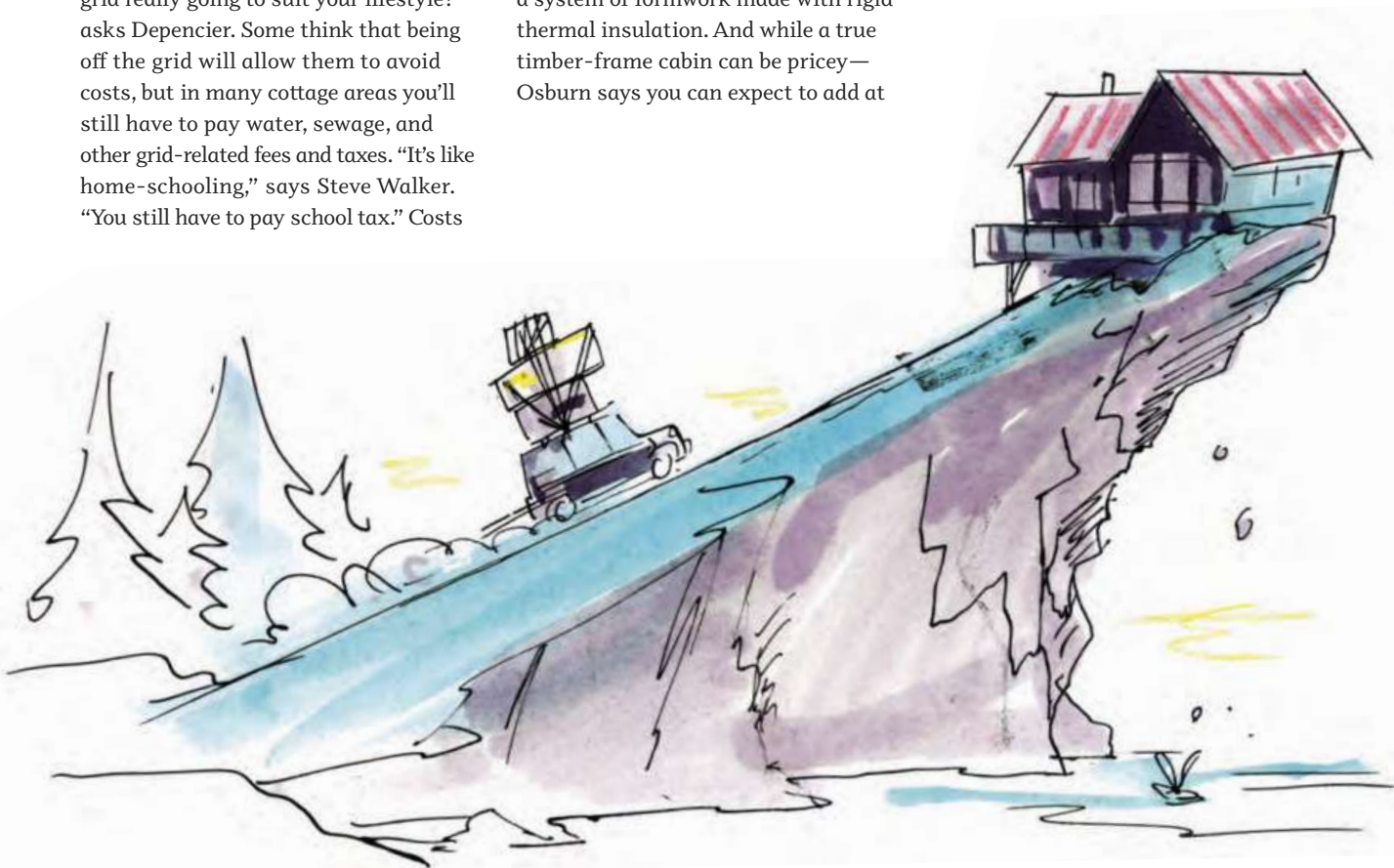
While Osburn says half of his B.C. projects are off-grid, for architects and contractors in heavily built-up cottage areas such as Ontario’s cottage country, off-grid projects are a rarity. “Is being off the grid really going to suit your lifestyle?” asks Depencier. Some think that being off the grid will allow them to avoid costs, but in many cottage areas you’ll still have to pay water, sewage, and other grid-related fees and taxes. “It’s like home-schooling,” says Steve Walker. “You still have to pay school tax.” Costs

may not necessarily be lower, either, since systems and equipment can be expensive. “You’ve got some highly technical equipment and it needs to be installed by qualified technicians,” says Havelock, Ont., home inspector Marc Thibodeau. “Things can go seriously wrong if they’re improperly installed.” Still, you may opt to go off-grid for environmental reasons or because you simply want to be self-sufficient—or in areas where grid power is unreliable or expensive to install. (Also worth remembering: you’re responsible for maintaining the electrical power equipment and lines on your property, which can add to your long-term costs.)

TIMBER, STONE, LOG OR...

“What do you want to use the building for, and what do you want it to look like?” Those are the questions that Blain asks his clients when it comes to the type of structure they envision. If it’s a low-maintenance recreational getaway, Blain suggests building with an energy-efficient insulated concrete form, a system of formwork made with rigid thermal insulation. And while a true timber-frame cabin can be pricey—Osburn says you can expect to add at

least 20 per cent to the cost of a frame cottage because of the materials and skilled labour involved—you can get the timber-frame look for much less by using faux beams in great rooms or sunrooms, “the areas where people want to entertain and relax,” says Blain. Log construction and stone masonry are also labour-intensive, and you’ll need to take into account the availability of local builders who can handle the job, says Thom. “You have to be realistic about who you have working for you and how challenging you are making it for the craftsmen and contractors. Bringing people in from bigger centres to remote places may seem like a solution, but it’s not always successful.” The accessibility of your site will also affect the cost of getting materials to your location and may rule out some materials entirely.



YOUR DESIGN SHOULD BE SENSITIVE TO THE MOVEMENT OF THE SUN

WHAT'S YOUR FOOTPRINT?

A one-level cottage may be your preferred option, but water and property line setbacks, foundation and roof costs, or topography may force you to go up rather than out. "If you don't have a lot of land, a two-storey might be a must," says Thom, "but if you're building on a low island that others look on to, building a two-storey structure might be a bit of a thumb in their eye. It all depends on the site." And the sightlines, says Osburn. "You'll want a multi-storey building if you want to get up in the air to see something—or see over something," he says. Weather conditions may also play a role in your decision. "You may want a building that will defend itself against winds, one with little courtyards, wrapping the building around to create pleasant outdoor circumstances," says Mark Osburn.

WHEN A DOOR CLOSES...

"Good windows and doors pay for themselves over time," says Thom. But figuring out where to put them—and how big to make them—requires some careful thought. Structural considerations such as beam placement may limit the wall of windows you envision looking out on to the lake—as may the heat of the sun. "It might seem like a good idea to add a wall of windows to the west face of the building, but you may end up getting baked like a potato inside or have to

wear your sunglasses while you eat dinner," he says. Your architect should be sensitive to the movement of the sun and design to minimize the impact on the cottage—by adding long eaves over windows, for example. Designing for cross-ventilation also helps. "In our projects," says Thom, "every room has at least two walls with operable windows."

Osburn points out that lots of wind and moisture—like what cabin owners get on the B.C. coast—can end up compromising double-glazed windows over time. "The seals fail under these conditions," he says, blaming building codes—set for dryer, colder inland climates—that don't allow for what he considers a better option in windy, damp sites: single-glazed windows with shutters. Still, windows are improving, he says, so failing seals should be less of an issue in the future. He suggests installing high-end European metal-clad windows, although they are more expensive.

WHO'S BEEN SLEEPING IN MY BED?

Cottages typically sacrifice bedroom space for living and entertaining space, says Depencier, "since you aren't there to sleep." He recommends building a full basement for the extra sleeping space, since it will double the size of the cottage for not a whole lot more money. Blain suggests that {Continued on page 108}



Custom design without a custom price tag? Who

BEST



**Build
it!**

LAID

knew! A kit cottage ain't what it used to be

PLANS



By Ray Ford Photography Derek Shapton





A snake.

A rattlesnake, to be precise. That's what Neil Hester noticed while lugging groceries up to his cottage, coiled beside the only route to the building. The massasauga's vibrating tail "stopped me in my tracks," the Pointe au Baril cottager says. "He was probably two feet away from where my foot would be." Hester backed away, mentally revising his cottage blueprints. "Maybe we should have a staircase on the other side of the cottage too."

When you're designing your dream cottage—in this case, the lustrous, glass-sided summer home that Hester built with his wife, Vicky Lewis—it makes sense to gather advice, even from the local rattler. Completed in 2012, the 1,370 sq. ft. cottage has the hip look of a custom design—"all straight angles and corners," as Hester describes it. "I didn't really want a cottage that stood out; I wanted it to blend into the scenery." Even so, the interior lighting makes the cottage glow like a lantern at night. Passing boaters slow to admire it and sometimes wave at the couple as they sit by the woodstove or eat dinner.

Though it has the air of a big-money project, the kind you might consider when your lottery number comes up, no lotto was required. Instead, Hester went *DIY*, as in *Design It Yourself*. He worked out the concept, had a kit builder turn the idea into plans, and hired a contractor to barge a \$58,000 package of materials to the site and then erect the structure. By the time it

The 16-foot Goshawk canoe that rests on the lower deck (opposite) is one of two that Neil Hester and Vicky Lewis use at their Georgian Bay cottage. Passionate paddlers, the couple wanted their place to feel close to nature, and they specified a design that lets in abundant light. The open-concept interior is uncluttered, especially the kitchen (above). There are no

upper cabinets or large appliances—the refrigerator is hidden around the corner, and there is a bar fridge in the island. The building's board-and-batten white pine siding has weathered nicely to silver grey, but debate rages on about whether to stain it. "I'm not sure the effort to stain and restrain is worth it," says Hester.

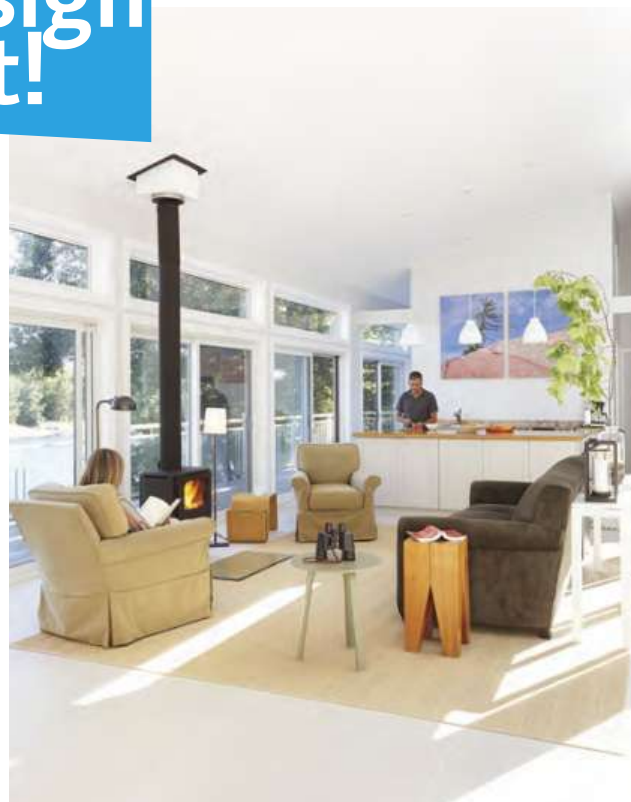
Design it!

was done, the whole project came in at about \$1.50 per square foot. Not bad when it's easy to spend twice that.

By opting for a building package (see "What's a Kit Cottage Anyway? p.69), Hester was able to translate his vision into plans by professional designers and then have the same firm also bundle up all the materials he'd need. "It's not the least expensive way to build," the youthful 64-year-old admits. "But it gives you flexibility to stray from standard designs." The result? Their kit and his dream—a satisfying partnership.

When Hester and Lewis decided to build a cottage, after decades of canoeing and camping, the newbies spent two years scouting Central Ontario for the right place. They soon learned that easy-to-build-on lots were out of their price range. So in 2008, they settled on the rocky sweep of Brignall Bank Narrows—300 feet of frontage backed by three acres of gnarly rock and bush—a bargain at \$148,000.

Lewis, a 62-year-old retired teacher, grew up cottaging on Six Mile Lake, Lake of Bays, and near Honey Harbour. She's also a veteran of years of summer canoe trips with Hester and their children, Kim and Robert, now 28 and 31. Her paddler's eye was drawn to the lot's sandy {Continued on page 70}



"Not much separates us

- 1 Bedrooms
- 2 Bed bump-outs
- 3 Utility room
- 4 Bathrooms
- 5 Kitchen
- 6 Living room
- 7 Dining room
- 8 Storage
- 9 Stairs
- 10 Wraparound deck

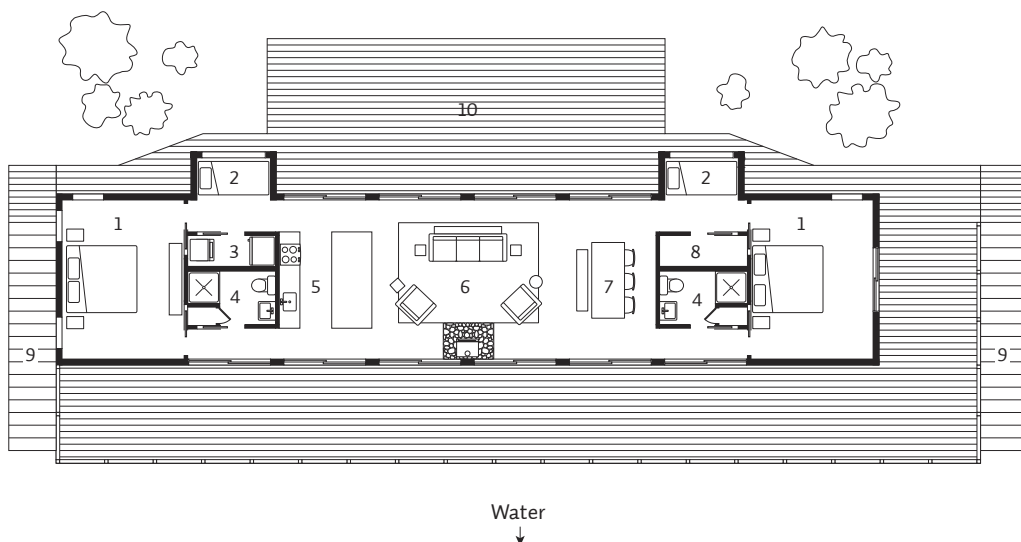


ILLUSTRATION: JACQUES PERRAULT



The original plan called for a wide set of stairs to stretch across the front of the 80-foot-long cottage, but the couple worried the stairs would look like bleachers and dominate the view. Instead, they chose a wraparound deck, with more discreet sets of stairs on each end (plans, opposite). The cottage design was inspired by a celebrated home in

New York State, but Hester and Lewis made a few adjustments. They managed to find room for two extra beds, for example, by adding small bump-outs to the north side. Each one fits a low-cost Ikea bed—including two storage drawers (left). A large window adds ventilation. “There’s a great view of the stars from those beds at night,” Hester says.

from the outdoors”







Plan
it!



Blipp the cottage at left for a slide show of the construction process

What's a kit cottage anyway?

Kit cottages bundle plans, materials, and, in some cases, pre-built components or modules, into one package that ships to your site, ready for assembly. They offer convenience at a competitive price, says Keith Bulmer, the manager of Bytown Lumber in Carleton Place, Ont. With everything on hand, you should never run short of nails or lumber on the job, making kits especially handy for remote locations.

WHAT'S OUT THERE?

There are many options under the umbrella term "kit cottage," including true kits (precut and numbered lumber), prefabs, modular cottages, and building packages (a plan and materials, including uncut lumber). At the simpler end of the spectrum, Bytown Lumber will deliver some or all of the materials, while you build the foundation and supply the labour or hire a contractor. Bytown's basic package for a 1,191 sq. ft. model includes framing, shingles for the roof,

windows and exterior doors, and soffit and fascia but no siding, for about \$17,900, or \$15 per sq. ft. Add insulation, vinyl siding, drywall, trim, doors, and a pressure-treated front deck and the price goes up to about \$27,400, or \$23 per sq. ft.

At the higher end of the range, John Axmith, of Axmith and Co. in Barrie, Ont., designs and distributes cottages made by Lindal Cedar Homes. Cottagers can opt for a Lindal design, suggest changes, or work up their own concept for an additional fee. Depending on the interior finish, costs start at about \$300 to \$400 per sq. ft. for a fully finished cottage. The result is a turn-key cottage with, for example, cedar siding or shingles rather than vinyl, and fibre-glass shingles rather than asphalt.

Some companies bridge the design-build gap. For 16 per cent of the cottage's construction cost, Haliburton-based Cedar Winds Design Build will develop a custom design and manage the building project.

"Because we're a one-stop shop, the transition from design to construction is relatively seamless," says architectural designer Glenn Evans.

OTHER ADVANTAGES?

For one, expert advice. Budget discipline is a challenge in any project, but opting for a building package can help. "If you tell me what your budget is, I'll keep you within it," says Home Hardware Building Centre's Dave Bond. He may suggest you cut down the number of windows or eliminate dormers. Pricy interior finishes (granite counters, elaborate baths) can be particularly expensive.

ISN'T IT CHEAPER TO GO DIY?

Not necessarily. "Most clients don't have time to manage the project and the different trades," says Mark Wrightman, a sales and design consultant with True North Log Homes in Bracebridge, Ont. "So it depends on whether your money is worth more than your time."



shoreline, bedrock, and pines because “it looks like a good campsite.” Better yet, the site links the family’s passion for the outdoors with their cottaging aspirations. “As you get older, more comfort is appreciated,” she says. “It’s nice to have different generations of the family staying and visiting together.”

A good place to pitch a tent doesn’t always make an easy building site. Fortunately, Hester, a former land-use planner with Ontario’s Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, relished the challenge posed by the site’s sloping terrain. “Neil’s detail-oriented,” Lewis says. “He researches everything, everything, as much as possible before making a decision.”

The first decision was easy: no blasting. Hester decided to “take the terrain as it is and build something to go with it.” Then came the hard part. Leafing through books of plans and builders’ catalogues and clipping items from architecture magazines, he saw that most designs fit level lots with good soil depth. Straying into rougher country requires a more innovative approach. Challenges include the higher costs of preparing a rough site and delivering materials to a remote location. Sites that aren’t level and that don’t have deep soil also tend to preclude the most efficient design—the two- or three-floor walkout cottage, which typically offers the lowest cost per square foot.

Unhappy with the off-the-rack designs he’d seen, Hester made tentative inquiries into hiring an architect. Ballpark costs to get started were \$20,000 to \$25,000. He worried that his budget—roughly \$150,000—wouldn’t support the fee.

After attending a cottage planning and building seminar, Hester considered a middle option: rather than an off-the-rack cottage or a fully bespoke one, what about drawing up his own design and getting a building company to transform it into a package of plans and materials? “I thought something long and narrow could work,” he says, noting a relatively flat stretch of rock about six metres above the water level. Months before he purchased the lot, Hester was inspired by Sixteen Doors House, a slim, glass-covered New York State getaway that he’d seen in a design magazine. Maybe his own take on the design would fit the site?

{Continued on page 105}

**Build
it!**



ILLUSTRATION: JACQUES PERRAULT



The best designs leave room for serendipity. Who could have known, for example, that the large glass doors that face the water (p. 68) frame an area where deer cross the channel? Inside, the sleek white oak dining table (left) fits up to eight people—albeit with a bit of squishing on the bench along one side. The northwest-facing back deck is

the preferred spot to catch the late-day sun, sitting in one of the chairs that Neil built from plans in this magazine. It's also where guests will pitch a tent when the beds inside are full, including the guest bedroom with a king-sized bed (opposite). "The cottage is a place to entertain," says Lewis, "a place to have family and kids and friends up."





By Allan Britnell Photography Liam Mogan

Getting from deck to dock is never as easy as A to B.



EVEN after your commute, there's often one final obstacle between you and the lake: the steep route from the cottage down to the water. The unspoiled terrain that draws us to the lake can also get in the way of fully enjoying cottage life. Whether your rickety old stairway is due for a makeover or you need to build one from scratch, here's some guidance on planning your path to paradise.

If you're simply replacing existing stairs, use their route as a guide—and make improvements based on your own experience of using them. You could, for example, break up a long run of stairs with an extra landing as a rest stop. But at a new cottage, where there's never been a proper path, your first step is simply taking a stroll, looking for the natural course down to the lake. In some cases, the route could include a mix of footpaths, switchbacks, and stairs; in others, you may need a series of stairways connected by landings.

Often, a gentle slope is just a little too steep for the very young and the very old, but doesn't warrant building a full set of above ground stairs. Rather than build above, consider embedding directly into the ground. For instance, you could install stacked treads of natural or manufactured stone. Depending where you are in Canada, four-foot-wide slabs of granite cost about \$250 a piece. You can get stone treads up to about 10' wide,

Where do you start building a set of shoreline stairs: down by the lake or up at the cottage? Set up base camp where you have better access for building materials. If you're bringing everything in by boat and have power down at the dock, start there, rather than schlepping everything up the hill. Likewise, if the wood and the juice are up top, that's the logical place to work.

STAIR MASTER

How to build a shoreline staircase over tricky ground

A FOOTPATH, A SWITCHBACK, AND STAIRS —



A bump-out landing (left) creates a just-in-time rest stop for anyone heading up to the cottage. Think outside boxy squares and rectangles when designing a landing. A curved edge or an irregular shape can add both aesthetic appeal and a smoother transition, especially if one flight of stairs is steeper than the next or if they meet at an unusual angle.

but the price jumps to nearly \$1,000 per step, not including labour—lifting rocks that heavy is definitely not a dry job.

A cheaper option is to build simple frames of pressure-treated (PT) lumber on the ground (see “Travel on Gravel,” opposite). Colin Hunter, a contractor and the owner of 919 Reno, used this solution in the multi-tiered stairway project shown in these pages and featured on *Decks, Docks & Gazebos* when he hosted the show on the Cottage Life channel.

Steep learning curves

Steep slopes lead to bigger building challenges. The tall structures needed have more tendency to rack, or tilt, laterally. Joe Meeres, of the Meeres Construction Group in Chilliwack, B.C., is used to dramatic hillsides; he suggests that you install extra diagonal cross-bracing to prevent racking. As Hunter says, “It’s not like a low-slope stairway, where, if something goes wrong, you don’t have far to fall.” He likes to use thicker wood and more reinforcement for steep-slope structures. Hire an engineer if you have any doubts, he advises.

There’s a risk too that steep ground *itself* isn’t stable. Design your stair layout so that footings can go into solid ground (in bedrock if possible), and, after spring runoff, check that erosion hasn’t weakened any anchor points. >>





ON STEEP TERRAIN YOU MAY NEED THEM ALL

Travel on gravel

As an alternative to conventional stairs, consider positioning stringers on the ground and connecting them with wood risers. You can add wood treads on top, or lay down a bed of crushed granite or limestone (which ever is more readily available) to partially fill the frame. Top it with a thin layer of pea gravel, which is more comfortable on bare feet.

“Even with natural materials, a tread will always feel like it was built by a human being,” says Colin Hunter. “Pea gravel feels more natural, like it was always there, compared to even a wooden stair.”

Whenever you build an embedded structure, consider how it affects drainage. If heavy rains will naturally drain across the steps, you’ll need to either channel water below your stairs via some drainage pipe or divert it around with, say, large stones. Always try to direct runoff so it percolates slowly into the soil, rather than sluicing down into the lake.



Code words

Let's address the elephant on the shoreline: the building code. Or, actually, building codes. As well as the National Building Code, there are provincial codes and municipal bylaws. Their relationship status? It's complicated. Federal agencies maintain the NBC. It's an expensive, difficult task, so the provinces use the NBC as the template, with modifications here and there, for their own legislation. Provinces empower municipalities to enforce, through zoning bylaws, what you can build and where.

Start with a visit to the building department office nearest your cottage. The local building official often has leeway to interpret the provincial code, a document that isn't light reading but does ensure that structures are safe and long-lasting. Hard to argue with that.

In some places, shoreline stairs that are not attached to a boathouse or the cottage may be considered a landscaping element—permits and the code may not apply. But even if a project is exempt, wise cottagers follow the building code. Nothing ruins a weekend quite like a trip to an emergency room. And if someone gets injured because of shoddy construction, you could face some tough questions from insurance companies, their lawyers, and your own conscience.

Happy landings

Ideally, your site will have natural terraces that can become rest stations. If not, build them. Landings let visitors stop to catch their breath—or to have it taken away by the view. But, more practically, landings are also a safety feature, limiting how far someone could fall if they take a tumble. The National Building Code allows a maximum vertical distance of 12'2" between landings, but you should also check with local building authorities in case there are additional, more stringent design requirements in your neck of the woods.

When plotting out a stairway route, minimize the impact on existing vegetation so that the finished project looks like it's been there forever. But what if there's a mature tree right in the way of your ideal path? Consider building around it, literally. A tree trunk sprouting up through a landing connects the stairway to the natural surroundings. Just remember to build a generous landing—you'll need room to carry gear around the obstruction. Leave a wide gap around the trunk so the tree can sway and grow, and consider how roots may affect your stairs over time.

In British Columbia, Meeres points out, more than a small area of soil can move; the whole tectonic plate could shift. "We have seismic issues here. It's not a matter of if a big earthquake will hit, but when." To prepare for future upheaval, West Coast contractors beef up exterior stair framing with heavy-duty joist hangers and other metal hardware to reinforce all the connection points. "Simpson Strong-Tie does a lot of business out here," says Meeres.

Make it last and save money

If you commit to building a stairway, you don't want to have to redo it a few years later. Cedar is naturally rot- and pest-resistant and is more attractive than pressure-treated lumber, but it also costs up to twice as much. A common cost-saving compromise is to use PT for the hidden framing and cedar where it shows: stair treads, landings, and railings.

You can use composite lumber for many parts (though it's not strong enough for posts, joists, or other primary load-bearing members), and it will last even longer than cedar or PT, but you'll pay up front. Where a standard 2x6 PT deck board retails for around \$8, cedar will be around \$13—and composite will be at least four times as much as PT. Do the math on a set of 50 stairs; the treads alone could set you back an extra \$1,500.

If you use natural wood, pay the premium for "clear" (nearly knot-free) boards. Your stairs will look better and last longer. Knots can fall out or become areas for water to pool in; either can compromise a stair's strength.

The wider the lumber, the more it costs. That's why most projects use two 2x6s (or three 2x4s) for an 11" tread. Leave a small gap between the pieces ($\frac{1}{8}$ " to $\frac{1}{4}$ ", a little less if you're building in summer when the wood will be swelled with ambient moisture) to allow for seasonal expansion and contraction and for rainwater to drain.

Those relatively thin $\frac{5}{4}$ deck boards that look so straight and true stacked neatly at the building supply centre can warp after a couple of seasons' worth of rain and snow. At the other end of the scale are

{Continued on page 85}



Blipp the photo at left for a video tour of this shoreline staircase project

A top-down photograph of various garlic products on a rustic wooden surface. In the upper left, there are three solo garlic bulbs with their roots and long, thin stems. To their right are several elephant garlic bulbs, some whole and some partially peeled to show the large cloves. On the right side of the image, there is a large pile of green garlic scapes, which are long, thin stalks that have curled into loops. The wood grain of the surface is clearly visible, running vertically.

SOLO GARLIC

The convenience pack of the garlic world. A bulb of solo garlic has only one large clove, encased in its own papery peel. Cute.

ELEPHANT GARLIC

Large, onion-sized bulbs with cloves the size of shallots. Best used raw in salads or dressings; its mild garlicky flavour can get lost in a cooked dish.

GARLIC SCAPES

Green, mild-tasting garlic stalks, often sold at farmers' markets in May and June. Looped or curled, with a pointy flowering end, they can be stir-fried, roasted, or blended into a delicious pesto.

GARLIC

We love it. We hate it. There's too much of it. No, not nearly enough. It makes the dish. It ruins the evening. We're afraid to use it. We can't cook without it. Garlic. It's a culinary conundrum — *Evelyn Raab*

Photography Edward Pond



Braised lamb shanks with garlic



Which bud's for you?

When choosing fresh garlic, look for firm heads, tight papery skin, and large cloves. Much of the garlic sold in Canada is imported, but it's worth seeking locally grown bulbs at fall farmers' markets. It's fresher, and you'll be supporting local agriculture—a good thing. You can always find regular bulb garlic in supermarkets, but solo garlic, elephant garlic, and scapes are three less common types to look for (see p. 78).

Planting season

Plant garlic in fall, a month or so before the ground freezes—simply bury large cloves, paper on and roots down, about 2" (5 cm) deep. In spring, the plant sends out the scape; remove it so the plant's energy goes into fattening the bulb underground. In Canada, bulbs are harvested in late summer or early fall and allowed to air dry, after which they can be stored for many months.

BRAISED LAMB SHANKS WITH GARLIC

A guest-worthy main for a crisp fall evening. It practically cooks itself, letting you do more important things, like have a nap.

Preheat the oven to 450°F (230°C). Rub 4 lamb shanks with about 2 tbsp (30 ml) olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Place in a heavy Dutch oven or casserole and roast, uncovered, for about 20 minutes, turning the shanks to brown on all sides. Reduce temperature to 325°F (160°C). Scatter 15–20 whole, peeled garlic cloves and a few sprigs of fresh rosemary over lamb. Pour in 1 cup (250 ml) white wine. Cover pot and cook, undisturbed, for about 2 hours—the lamb should be fork-tender. Remove lid and increase heat to 375°F (190°C) for 10 minutes or so, until sauce thickens slightly and lamb browns a little more. (If the lid is loose, the sauce may already have reduced; add more wine if needed.)

MAKES 4 servings.

ROASTED GARLIC

Peel away any loose papery skin from a bulb; slice across the pointy end to expose the cloves. Drizzle with olive oil and wrap tightly in foil. Bake at 400°F (200°C) or tuck in a corner of the barbecue for 35–40 minutes, until garlic is golden and squishy and squeezes out of the skin. Then:

- Add to mashed potatoes, with butter or olive oil and a splash or three of cream.
- Spread toasted French bread with a little goat cheese and top with a roasted garlic clove.
- Use roasted garlic instead of raw for a mellower, less pungent hummus.
- Mix a few cloves into store-bought or homemade mayonnaise for a fabulous sandwich spread.
- Whisk a few smushed cloves into salad dressing.

SALSA VERDE

Your new favourite condiment for eggs, steak, poached salmon, and more. With the food processor running, drop in 2 garlic cloves to chop finely. Stop the machine and add 2 cups (500 ml) flat-leaf parsley leaves, 2 anchovy fillets, 1 tbsp (15 ml) capers, 1 tbsp (15 ml) red wine vinegar, and ½ cup (125 ml) olive oil. Process until nearly smooth, scraping down sides as needed. Add ½ cup (125 ml) fresh bread crumbs. Process until smooth. Use it everywhere.

PASTA AGLIO E OLIO

Pasta. Garlic. Olive oil. Cheese. What more do you need? Pour ¼ cup (60 ml) olive oil into a large skillet over medium heat. Sauté 8–10 chopped garlic cloves until barely golden. Stir in ½ tsp (2 ml) hot pepper flakes and remove from heat. Cook spaghetti or linguine (1 lb/500 g for 4–5 servings). Before draining, scoop out 1½ cups (375 ml) of pasta water. Return oil-garlic skillet to the heat and add pasta water. Cook for 5 minutes. Add drained pasta, 1 cup (250 ml) grated Parmesan, and a good handful of chopped parsley. Toss to heat through.



Vampires begone! Blipp the roasted garlic for more delicious recipes



Prost, cottagers!
Obatzda, as this Bavarian cheese spread is called, makes a great fall snack at the cottage. Serve it with German-style bread or pretzels—and beer, of course. Salted radishes, crunchy vegetables, and pickles round out the festivities.

Just before serving, garnish with your choice of thinly sliced radish, red onion, green olives, dill pickles, or a sprinkle of sweet paprika and finely chopped green onion.

Oktoberfest obatzda spread

8 oz ripe Camembert or Brie (including soft, bloomy rind), diced (250 g)
4 oz deli-style cream cheese (125 g)
¼ cup butter (60 ml)
1 clove roasted garlic (optional)
1 tsp ground caraway seeds (5 ml)
½ tsp sweet paprika (2 ml)
¼ cup finely chopped red onion (60 ml)
Salt and freshly ground pepper

Soften cheeses and butter at room temperature. In a food processor, pulse all ingredients except onion until almost smooth. (Or mix in a bowl with a wooden spoon.) Add onion, season with salt and pepper, and pulse until just combined. Transfer to a bowl, cover, and refrigerate for at least an hour or for up to four days to allow flavours to blend. **MAKES** about 2 cups (500 ml). —Jane Rodmell

SAYS THE PIE MAN

Pie-making is like hanging drywall, says John Hughes. “The first time is difficult, but after 40 times, practice makes perfect.” Hughes, whose apple pie won the Men’s Open category of the 2014 Perfect Pie Contest in Warkworth, Ont., shares his tips.

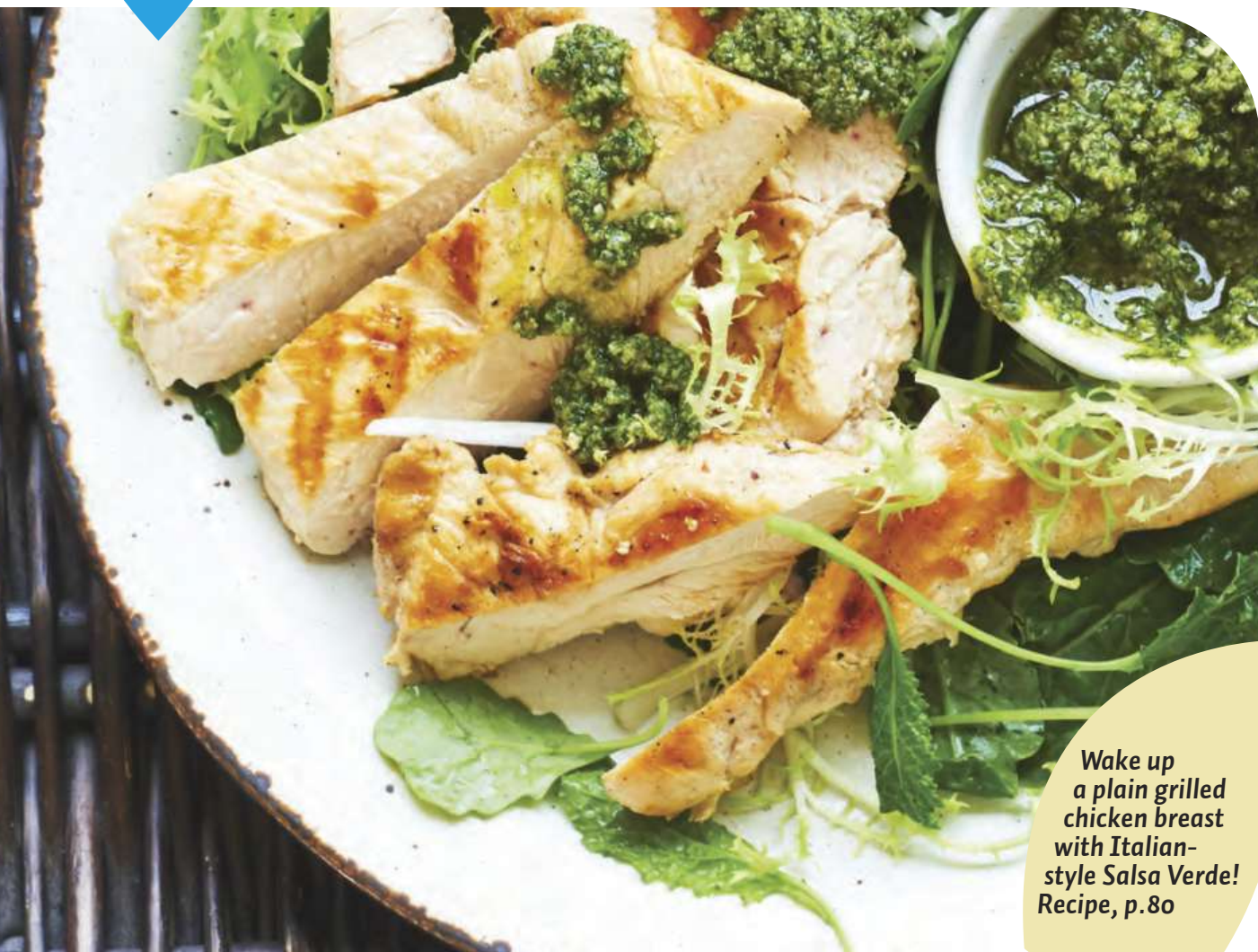
- Hughes uses three parts butter to one part shortening in his pastry. “It’s why people say mine tastes so good.”
- Use a food processor to cut fat into flour, but sprinkle with water by hand. “You can control it better. Too much water and the dough is sloppy; too little and it’s hard to work.”
- Handle pastry less rather than more. “Overworking is a big mistake—you’re not making bread.”
- Chill before rolling on a cold countertop.
- Use extra pastry to decorate the crust. (He did a leaf design for the winning pie.)
- “For a golden top crust, brush with cream and sprinkle with coarse sugar before baking.”

This year’s contest is on Saturday, Nov. 7, at the Warkworth Town Hall.
—Ann Vanderhoof



Blipp the pie for more tips and recipes





**Wake up
a plain grilled
chicken breast
with Italian-
style Salsa Verde!
Recipe, p.80**

No bones, no skin, no problem!

Like a celebrity worshipped by millions despite an acknowledged lack of talent, the boneless, skinless chicken breast easily wins the Most Popular Poultry Award on cottage grills. But even with its non-threatening good looks, everyone knows a grilled B-S breast can be boring, flavourless, and dry. Let's fix all these flaws.

Change the shape

Chicken breasts dry out on the grill because someone overcooked them, which is easy to do because their fat teardrop shape makes it impossible to cook one part properly without ruining the other. Brines are trendy and can make breasts "juicier" by adding water content, but a brine can't overcome the breast's odd shape. So, if you can't work with the shape, why not change it? Start by looking for the tenderloin, that cute little

morsel on the inside of the breast. If it's still there, remove it (save it for chicken fingers or cook as a chef's treat). Thinner breasts can be gently pounded with a meat mallet or the bottom of a heavy pot to even them out, but resist the urge to pulverize the flesh into mush. Thicker breasts should be either sliced in half or butterflied, and then pounded—gently.

Fix the flavour

Wet marinades are fun and easy, but most of the flavour gets left behind in the plastic bag or burned off on the grill. More importantly, wet meat won't brown properly, which really hurts in the flavour (and looks) department. A better way to pump up the flavour is to give the flattened breasts a very light coating of oil and a liberal dusting of dry spice rub. If you make your own rubs,

instead of buying them, you can control the salt content. Refrigerate the seasoned breasts for an hour or two before cooking.

Cook it right

We are terrified of *undercooked* chicken, so guess what happens? Cardboard! To prevent fear-induced overcooking, grab an accurate meat thermometer and grill breasts over direct medium-high heat, flipping often, until the thickest part of the breast reaches 140°F (60°C). It won't take long. Apply any sauces or glazes at this point, then continue cooking, using indirect heat now, until the chicken registers 160°F (71°C) at the thickest part. Remove breasts from the grill and let rest, loosely tented under foil, for about 5 minutes. They'll come up to an internal temperature of about 165°F (74°C) and any bacterial bogeymen will have been destroyed. Job done. The B-S breasts are delicious and you have avoided the dual spectres of both undercooked and dried-out poultry. —David Zimmer



Blipp the chicken for a video demo of butterflying and to learn more about meat thermometers

Craft-your-own cocktail

Playing bartender at a cottage party is fun. Scouring cocktail guides to memorize dozens of recipes? Not so much. Take a page out of actual bartenders' books and learn to make a few drinks with "good bones," and then spin those into dozens of new drinks by swapping out ingredients. —Christine Sismondo

DRINK
TICKET

Corpse Reviver #2



New Drink One



New Drink Two

One recipe that's a popular template is the Corpse Reviver #2. This jazz-age, hair-of-the-dog cocktail is exceptionally balanced: Equal parts strong, mild, sweet, and sour, all brought to life with a few drops of aromatic absinthe. Stick to the ratio, but sub in similar ingredients—tequila for gin, crème de cacao for orange liqueur, vermouth for Lillet—and the drink still works. Magic. Lemon juice, though, is the hardest to replace, since the punchy acidity works to cut most liqueurs' cloying sweetness.

The permutations are almost endless, but here are a few of my combos (you can use the brands you have on hand) to get you rolling. Or in this case, shaking and straining. —C.S.



Best name for each new drink wins a Cottage Life Weekend Collection prize pack—blipp the glasses to enter

A WELL-DRESSED HOBO

A grilled-in-foil "hobo pack" of potatoes is a side-dish that's as fool-proof as it is easy to gussy up. For each single-serving foil pack, slice (or dice) a large potato and 1/4 small onion, toss with olive or vegetable oil to coat, and season generously. Place on a double thickness of foil (about 12"/30 cm square) and add the embellishments below. Fold the edges to seal, and grill over indirect heat until the potatoes are cooked, about 35–45 minutes. Open carefully—they'll be hot.

BACON BLUE CHEESE POTATOES
Pour bottled blue cheese dressing over potatoes and onions (don't be stingy) and top with cooked, crumbled bacon. Seal the pack and grill.

OLIVE LEMON POTATOES
Top potatoes and onions with chopped olives and grated lemon zest. Squeeze lemon juice overtop before and after grilling.

COCONUT CURRY POTATOES
Top each serving with about 1 tsp (5 ml) curry powder, 3 tbsp (45 ml) coconut milk, and chopped cilantro to taste. —Martin Zibauer

	CORPSE REVIVER #2	NEW DRINK ONE	NEW DRINK TWO
STRONG 1 oz spirit	Gin	El Dorado rum (8-yr)	George Dickel rye whisky
MILD 1 oz aperitif	Lillet Blanc	Warre's port (10-yr)	Dolin dry vermouth
SWEET 1 oz liqueur	Cointreau	Ferrand Dry curaçao	Heering cherry liqueur
SOUR 1 oz juice	lemon juice	strong coffee, chilled	lemon juice
AROMATIC 3 drops herbal spirit	Absinthe or Pernod	orange bitters	Benedictine
GARNISH	Luxardo cherry	orange twist	lemon twist

Expert Grilling Tips

FROM **Hidde Zomer**

EXECUTIVE CHEF, THE CARBON BAR

1 To maximize flavours in the Zesty Chicken Spice rub add some good olive oil and mix in some fresh rosemary, thin sliced clove of garlic and dried chilli flakes. Let the chicken marinate over night before grilling.



2 When slow cooking a pork butt for pulled pork, make sure to rub the meat first with vegetable oil and add the spice rub so that it will really stick to the meat. Be generous with rub and fully cover the meat.



For the full line of Cottage Life Weekend Collection products, visit cottagelife.com/collection



Buttermilk blues?

Okay, so you bought a carton of buttermilk for your world-famous blueberry buttermilk pancakes. Sunday breakfast was delicious, but now there's half a carton of perfectly good buttermilk moping about the fridge with nothing to do, nowhere to go. Here are three easy ways to give it purpose.

GRILLED BUTTERMILK SRIRACHA CHICKEN

Some writers oppose marinating chicken (see p. 82), but I'm firmly perched on the fence. In a bowl, mix 1 cup (250 ml) of buttermilk, 2 tbsp (30 ml) sriracha sauce (or your favourite hot sauce), the grated zest and juice of 1 lime, and a dash of salt. Into a large resealable plastic bag, place about 3 lbs (1.5 kg) chicken pieces—your choice, with or without skin and bone—with most of the marinade (reserve a little for basting). Refrigerate for at least one hour or for as long as overnight. Grill chicken pieces, basting with reserved marinade. Yum!

ICEBERG WEDGE SALAD WITH BLUE CHEESE BUTTERMILK DRESSING

In a bowl, place 1 cup (250 ml) crumbled blue cheese, ½ cup (125 ml) each buttermilk and Greek yogurt, ¼ cup (60 ml) mayonnaise, and salt and pepper. Mash with a fork until the cheese is incorporated and the dressing is creamy.

Cut a head of iceberg lettuce into 6 wedges—one per serving. Spoon the dressing overtop with your choice of crisp, crumbled bacon, diced tomatoes, slivered red onions, chopped chives, chopped cucumber, or whatever kept the buttermilk company in the fridge.

BUTTERMILK PANNA COTTA

Measure 3 tbsp (45 ml) cold water into a small bowl and sprinkle with 1½ tsp (7 ml) unflavoured gelatin. Let stand to soften. Meanwhile, heat 1½ cups (375 ml) 35% cream with ½ cup (125 ml) sugar in a small saucepan until it just begins to simmer. Remove from heat, add 1½ cups (375 ml) buttermilk, 1 tsp (5 ml) vanilla, and the gelatin mixture. Stir to dissolve and pour into 6 small custard cups. Chill until jiggly, at least 6 hours or overnight. Serve with fresh berries or a drizzle of aged balsamic vinegar. Or both.—Evelyn Raab



Blip the salad for more ways to use the buttermilk in your fridge

STAIR MASTER

{Continued from page 77}

special-order 3x12s, which some builders prefer for treads; such thick planks feel extra solid underfoot.

Sure footings

Remember that unspoiled terrain we referred to earlier? Unspoiled almost always means uneven and inconsistent too, which poses challenges when locating support posts. Don't be surprised if you need more than one footing type—often a mix of buried concrete footings and supports tied directly to bedrock.

"For anchoring, bedrock is best," says Hunter. "It's never gonna move. If it does, you've got bigger problems." Where the bedrock is exposed, he'll drill down into the stone and set a galvanized saddle post in place with a two-part construction epoxy. The epoxy sets rock solid in a matter of minutes, allowing minor adjustments before construction continues.

In some areas, building inspectors want concrete footings, even when it's possible to anchor directly into bedrock. Here, common practice is to drill and epoxy L-shaped pieces of rebar in the stone, build a form around the rebar, and pour a concrete footing.

If you are pouring footings into soil—with no attachment to bedrock—you'll need to dig below the frost line, at least 4' in most parts of Canada. (If you don't know how deep footings should be in your area, add that to your list of questions for the local building department.)

Stringers and railings

Laying out stringers is challenging, even intimidating, for many DIYers. Each stair in a set must be the same height and depth as all the others. The step that's off, even by $\frac{3}{8}$ ", is the one you'll stumble on. A standard stair has a 7"-high riser and an 11"-deep tread, but codes do allow for some variation—as long as *all* the steps are the same. Ergonomically speaking, as the stairs' slope gets steeper, the risers should get a little taller, a little more like a ladder.

It's not hard to lay out stairs so those in the middle of a run are evenly spaced; it's the top and the bottom ones that are most likely to be wonky, and trip people up. I once forgot to account for the fact

that the tongue-and-groove flooring on my front porch was thinner than the 2x6 stair treads. The $\frac{1}{2}$ " difference was enough that visitors often made a stutter step going up or down, injuring my DIYer ego every time.

Once you've done the mental gymnastics, cut your first stringer and clamp it to the others as a template. Murphy's Law says that you'll cut at least one incorrectly; unless you relish another trip into town, add a couple of extra pieces to your lumber order to be safe.

For the staircase width, three feet will meet the building code, but that's a bit stingy when people are passing in opposite directions. At four feet wide (or more), everyone can comfortably pass, and you can easily transport bulky items—like the beer cooler.

Hunter's client didn't want railings that would obstruct views of the lake, but the National Building Code requires railings on any platform more than two feet off the ground. Hunter found a code-compliant solution with an ingenious top-down approach.

With the stringers and posts in place for a run of stairs, Hunter laid out the bottom landing by levelling and attaching a 2x8 to the bottom railing post. He then simply followed the board out to the point where the landing would still be only two feet off the ground. That point marked the outer edge of the landing and became the spot to dig the next footing. Since no part of the landing is more than two feet above grade, railings are optional. Of course, railings make using stairs and landings more comfortable, so Hunter did install them on the landward side, where they don't block the view.

Avoiding rot

Wood in direct contact with soil is always going to rot more quickly than wood above ground. So, yes, those low-cost, pea gravel-filled PT frames that Hunter installed on the shallow slopes aren't going to last as long as the rest of the project. But they're cheap and easy to replace down the road.

In addition to avoiding the dreaded direct contact between lumber and soil, there are other ways to prolong the life of a stairway. Many builders coat the tops of framing members with water sealant before laying down deck boards and stair

treads. You can also take it a step further and wrap ice-and-water shield (usually used for roofing) overtop any framing that could be exposed to standing water. Also, don't forget to treat the exposed ends of any PT boards that you cut with aptly named end-cut preservative.

Lumber has a natural curve; trees are round after all. Before you secure any boards that lie flat—including stair treads, deck boards, and railing caps—look down the length of each piece of wood to find the curve. Attach them with the high point facing up so the board will shed water instead of allowing it to pool.

Fastener failure

When it comes time to start screwing everything all together, don't. Using deck screws to connect any framing or to attach a joist hanger is a rookie mistake, not to mention a code violation that can seriously compromise structural integrity. Regular screws don't have enough shear strength to support a load and they can simply snap. Nails are effective, code-compliant, and inexpensive, so most builders use them, but Hunter prefers to use carriage bolts to fasten framing to posts whenever it's practical and within budget. Bolts may be beyond what code requires, but "you learn from pulling decks apart what works," he says. "It's really hard to pull apart something that's carriage bolted. With nails, it usually just takes one good whack." All the traffic moving up and down the stairs can eventually cause nails to wiggle loose. If you follow Hunter's lead, add a chore to your annual cottage to-do list: "Tighten carriage bolts on stairs."

For water-access properties, the stairs are the entrance to your cottage. That first, dockside flight can be purely functional or it can become a focal point. You can add curb appeal with design elements such as a tempered-glass panel on the bottom landing and crossed braces that also give structural support.

If you plan your stairway right, you can end up with the best of both worlds: an uncongested, efficient expressway to and from the lake that's also the scenic route, complete with beautiful views and pleasant rest stops along the way. 🐾

Allan Britnell is the managing editor of Renovation Contractor magazine.

Another relaxing cottage moment

brought to you by...



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Cottage Plans



Want to build a cottage? You'll need to start with a plan. Take a look at these designs, from small to large, simple to luxurious, in four size categories. Go ahead, pick one

By Christine Sismondo`

Plan illustrations Len Churchill

< 1,000 SQ. FT.

Hide Away II



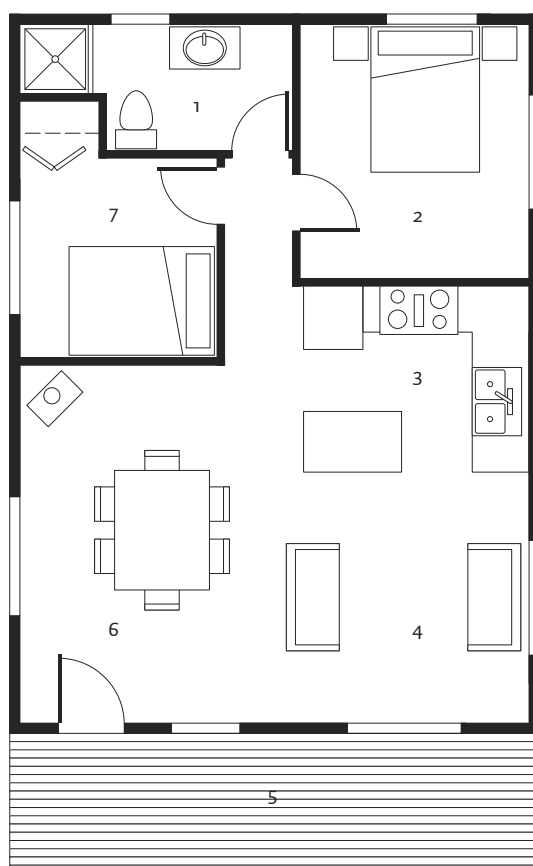
660 SQ. FT.
2 bedrooms
1 bathroom
loft option

No matter what Kermit the Frog says, it's actually pretty easy being green. At least it is if you opt for this snug and eco-friendly 660 sq. ft. cabin. Built with insulated panels made from recycled and renewable materials and designed with efficiency in mind, this cabin translates environmentally friendly living into real long-term savings. Heating costs, for instance, are estimated to be less than half of what

they might run in a similar-sized cottage built with conventional materials. Trout Creek's trademark eco-friendly and smart design principles also apply to the interior, which boasts two cozy bedrooms, an open living-dining area, and, for those who decide they want a little extra room, an optional loft for a third bedroom or additional storage space (plan not shown). troutcreekhomes.com

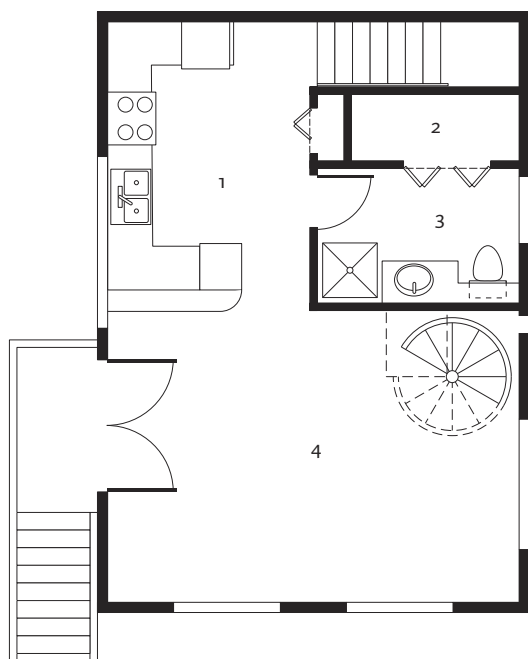
About the plans:

In some cases, the image is not exactly as shown in the floor plan because the cabin is a customized version of the plan or has a basement walkout that is not shown in the plan.

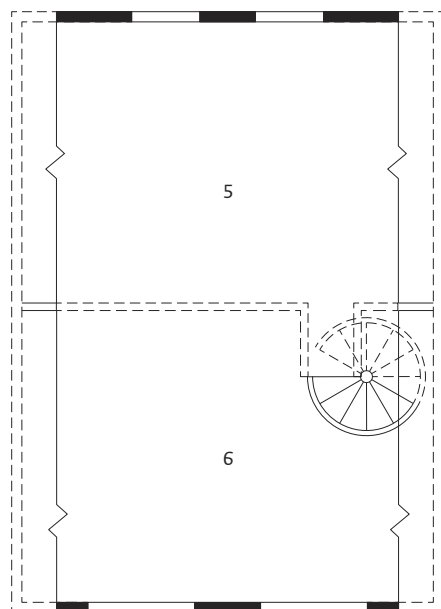


- 1 Bathroom
- 2 Bedroom
- 3 Kitchen
- 4 Living room
- 5 Deck
- 6 Dining room
- 7 Bedroom

< 1,000 SQ. FT.



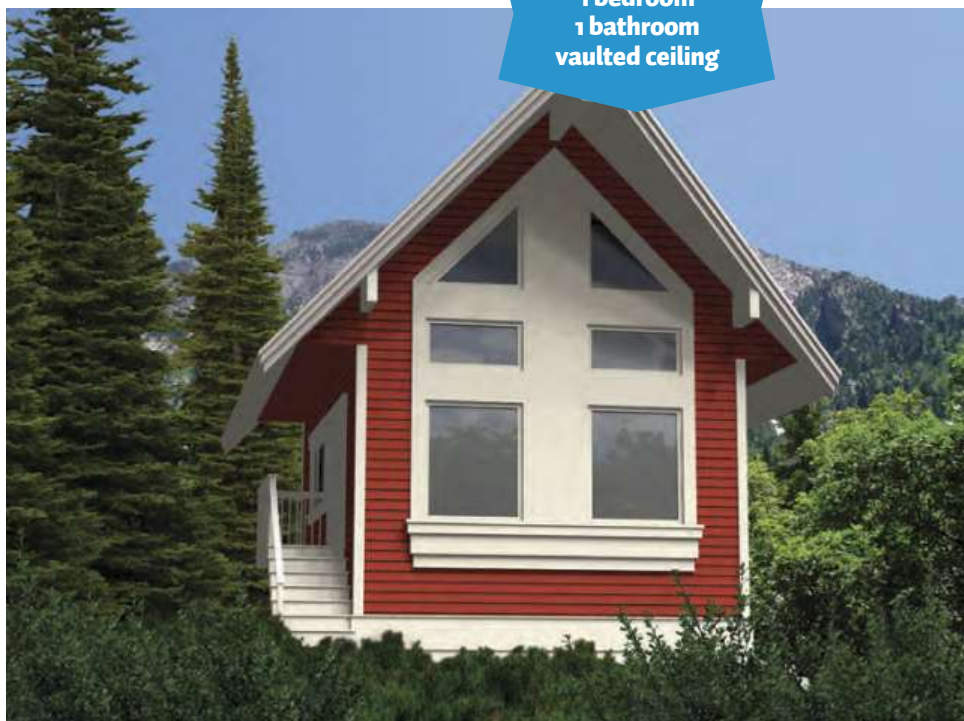
- 1 Kitchen
- 2 Closet
- 3 Bathroom
- 4 Great room
- 5 Loft bedroom
- 6 Open to below



Plan 840

Couples who know the value of romantic getaways will love this compact cabin that manages, in a modest footprint, to combine the luxurious feel of bright, open space with smart touches of cosmopolitan flair. The great room features a wall of windows, a vaulted ceiling, and a spiral staircase that winds its way up to a generous 250 sq. ft. loft bedroom. The quirky facade gives the cabin a kind of

continental charm, which, along with many thoughtful design features, such as a space-saving breakfast bar and French doors, make this a one-of-a-kind retreat. It's a fitting place to spend long weekends meandering around nature trails and having a marathon Monopoly game with a side of sparkling wine and tasty snacks. regan.swallowdesign.com



840 SQ. FT.
1 bedroom
1 bathroom
vaulted ceiling

< 1,000 SQ. FT.

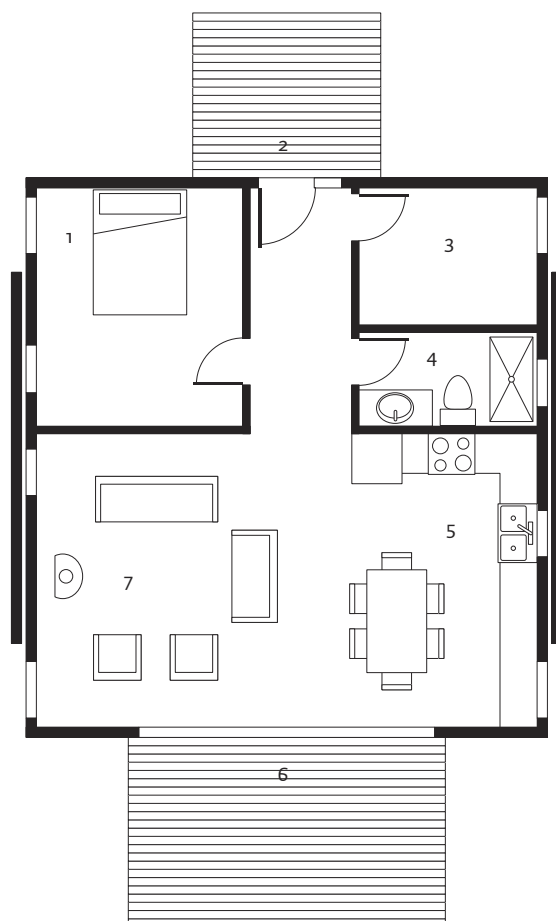
Pine Forest



850 SQ. FT.
1 bedroom
1 bathroom
open concept

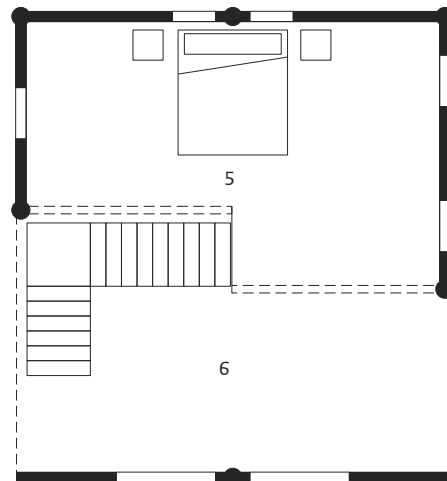
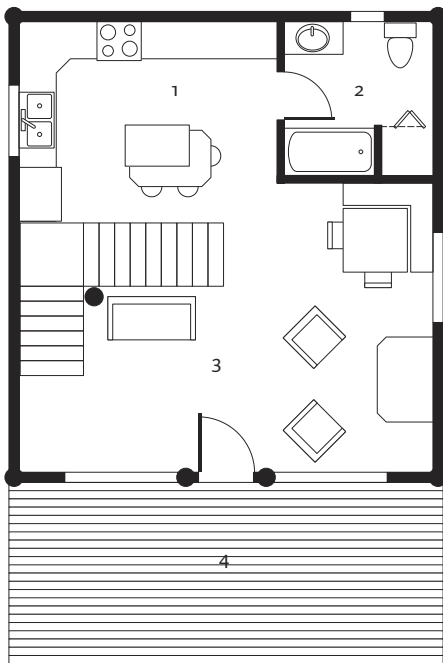
If you're the kind of person who thinks all you really need for a happy life is a room with a great view, Balance Associates has got you covered. Designed to jut out from a sloping landscape, this creative little modern box can be cantilevered over a hillside, making it an ideal vantage point for birdwatching or taking in the starry, starry night. The generous main

deck extends the living room into the outdoors. Clever design makes it truly easy to live large in a small space, with all the essentials (mudroom, bedroom, eat-in kitchen, and living room) neatly fitting into one compact 850 sq. ft. bungalow, suitable for retired folks looking for stair-free living. balanceassociates.com



- 1 Bedroom
- 2 Deck
- 3 Mudroom
- 4 Bathroom
- 5 Kitchen
- 6 Main deck
- 7 Living room

< 1,000 SQ. FT.



- 1 Kitchen
- 2 Bathroom
- 3 Living room
- 4 Deck
- 5 Bedroom
- 6 Open to below

Show Home

Quaint and charming, this log cabin could have been plucked straight out of a fairy tale. The vaulted living room beckons guests to sink into a stuffed couch and enjoy a good novel by the flickering of a cozy fire or to watch the wildlife passing by the windows. Log stairs lead up to a 304 sq. ft. loft bedroom, outfitted with optional log rafters and dormer

windows that give the space a roomier feel—plus a little extra light for early rising and lazy lounging. This all comes with a happy ending too, since this picture-perfect cottage is constructed of western red cedar, which enhances its resistance to decay and insects. *pioneer loghomes.com*



936 SQ. FT.
1 bedroom
1 bathroom
vaulted great room

1,000 > 1,500 SQ. FT.

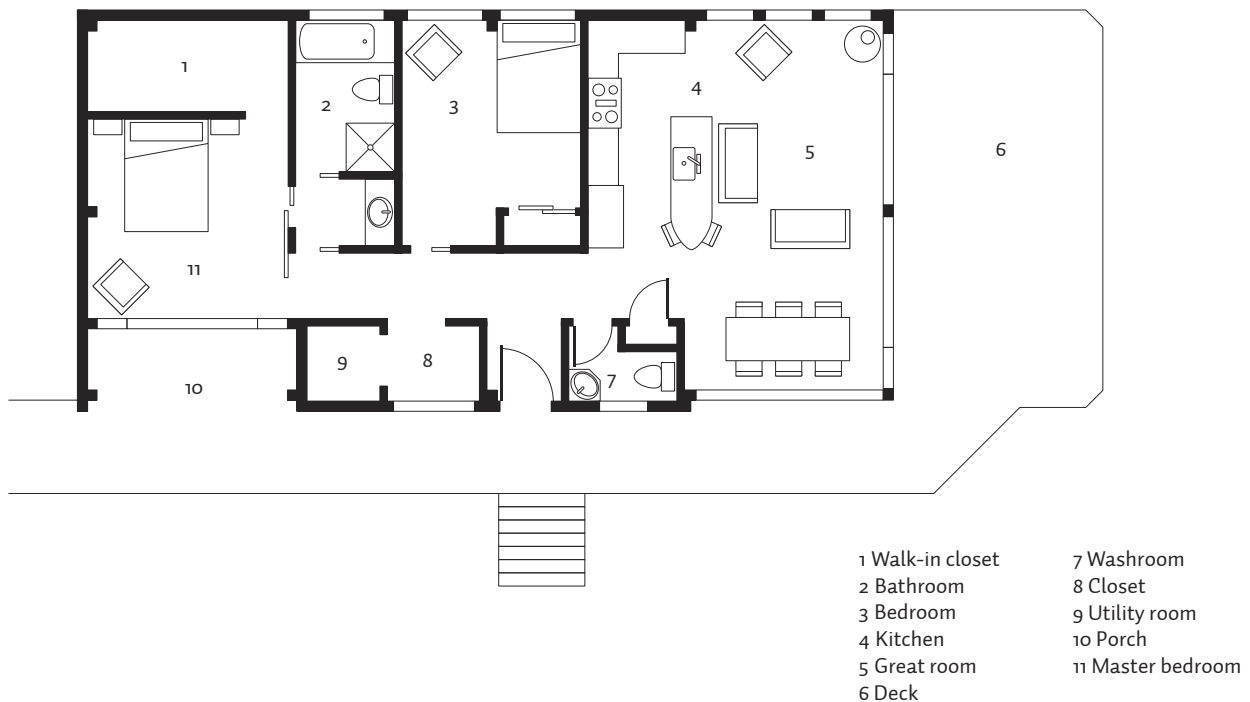
Pier One



1,115 SQ. FT.
2 bedrooms
1 bathroom
panoramic deck

Great for a rocky waterfront landscape, this contemporary cottage will be the envy of every boater passing by. Inspired by an ocean pier, this cool grey steel-and-cedar vacation home's distinctive features (including high ceilings, floor-to-ceiling windows, and a panoramic deck) blur the line between indoors and out for a genuinely tranquil and relaxing experience. Thoughtful touches such as

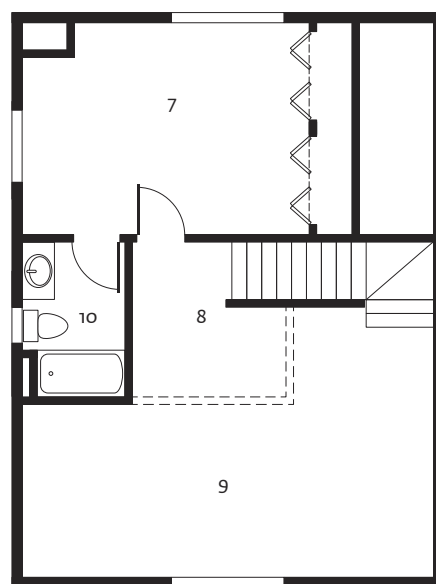
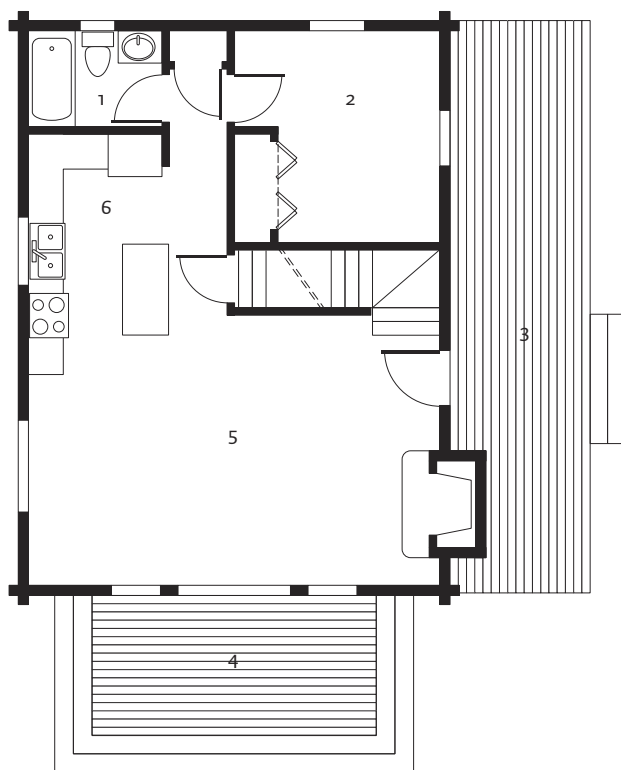
the small private porch off the secluded master bedroom offer opportunities for quiet reflection in this deeply social house, but the activity is bound to revolve around the great room and the exceptional cedar deck, suitable for lively gatherings, all-day barbecue parties, and relaxing evenings just sitting on the dock at the bay. *discoverydreamhomes.com*



1 Walk-in closet
2 Bathroom
3 Bedroom
4 Kitchen
5 Great room
6 Deck

7 Washroom
8 Closet
9 Utility room
10 Porch
11 Master bedroom

1,000 > 1,500 SQ. FT.



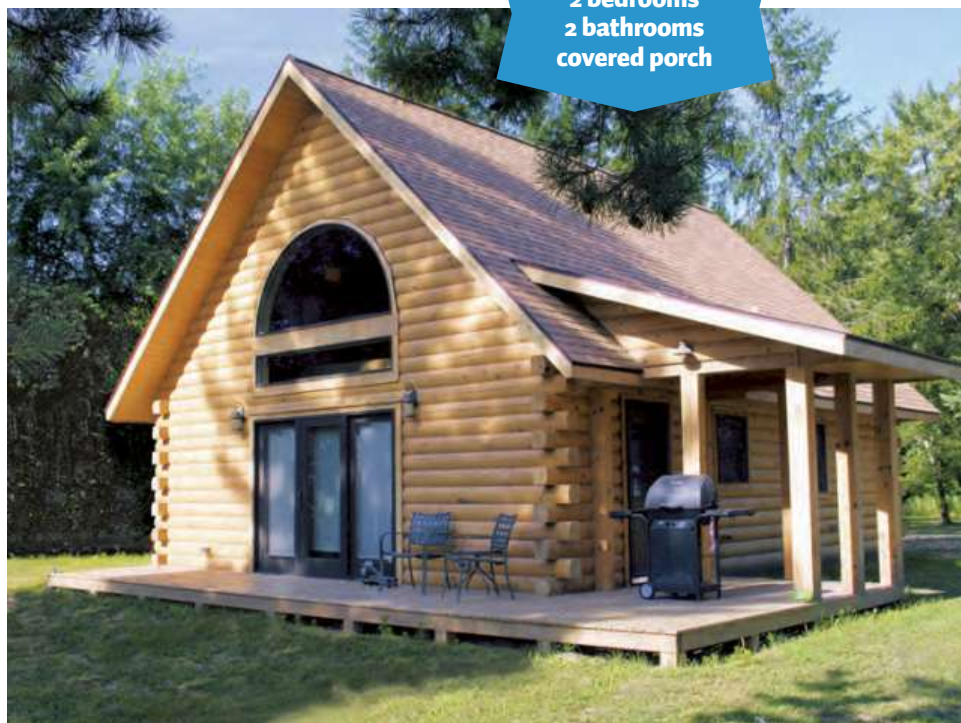
1 Bathroom
2 Bedroom
3 Porch
4 Deck
5 Great room

6 Kitchen
7 Bedroom
8 Loft
9 Open to below
10 Bathroom

Whitetail

This traditional-looking log cabin squeezes a lot of life into 1,133 sq. ft., in part because of its spacious second-floor loft with master bedroom and adjoining ensuite. In-laws and other weekend guests will love the main floor second bedroom with easy access to the bathroom, kitchen, and porch, not to mention the great room that opens out to a covered porch on one side and a long deck on another, making

for a grand total of 384 sq. ft. of hang space to satisfy outdoorsy types. Timber Castle uses eco-friendly, kiln-dried timber, which means the wood isn't treated with any chemicals and is less susceptible to warping, and, in the long run, this straight, tight fit will translate into less money spent on maintenance and heating. timbercastleloghomes.com



1,133 SQ. FT.
2 bedrooms
2 bathrooms
covered porch

1,000 > 1,500 SQ. FT.

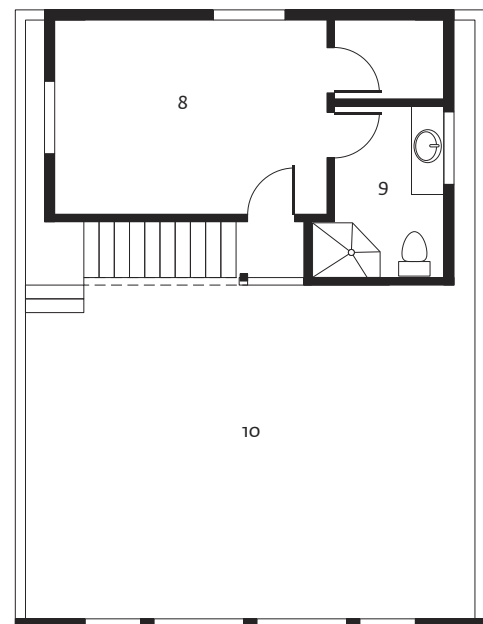
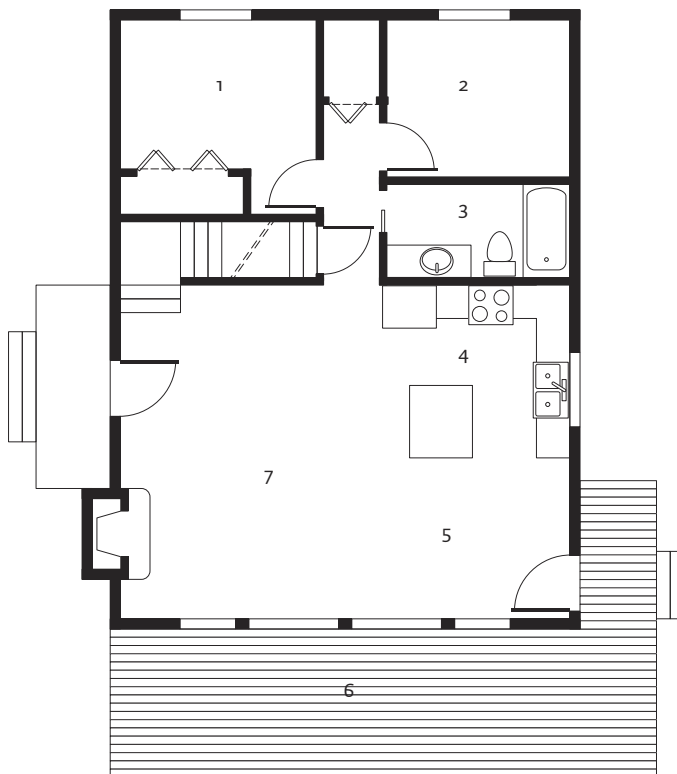
Sebright



1,182 SQ. FT.
3 bedrooms
2 bathrooms
optional sundeck

It's no wonder that Linwood's three-bedroom Sebright was chosen as a finalist in the "best single detached home under 1,500 sq. ft." category at the Canadian Home Builders' Association's national awards in 2014. With clean, simple design, this pretty model is efficient and exceptionally appealing, especially when the sunlight beams in through the front wall of windows to accentuate the

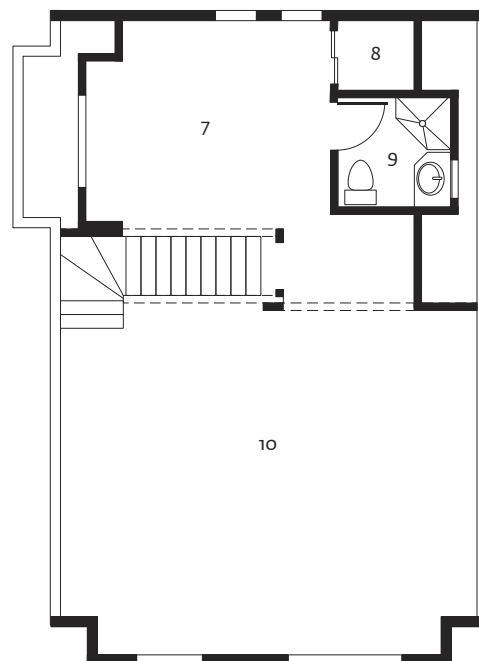
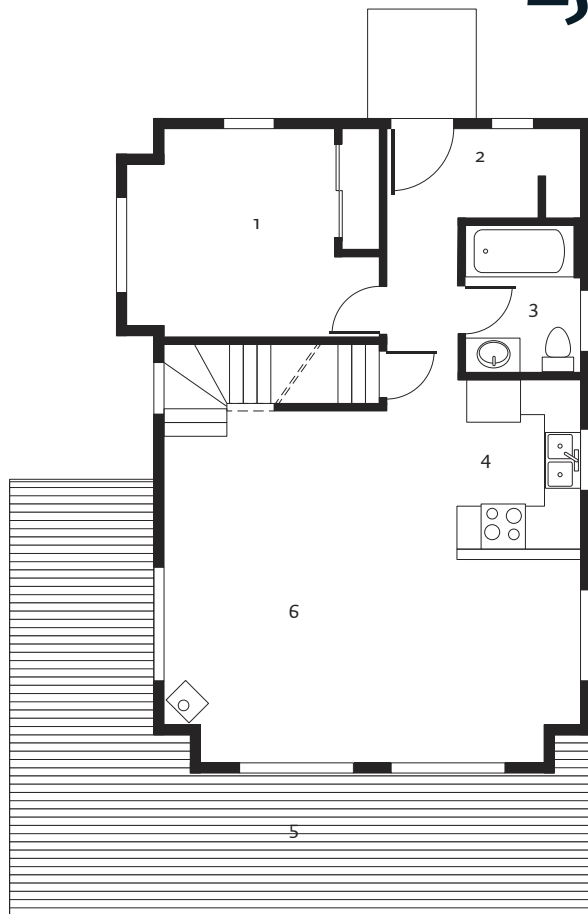
drama of the vaulted ceiling in the 252 sq. ft. living room. The open-concept kitchen and dining area makes it possible for friends and family to relax and chat over a table by the window during meal times. After dinner, they can retire to one of two bedrooms tucked away on the main floor or upstairs to the master bedroom with ensuite and walk-in closet. linwoodhomes.com



- 1 Bedroom
- 2 Bedroom
- 3 Bathroom
- 4 Kitchen
- 5 Dining room

- 6 Deck
- 7 Living room
- 8 Master bedroom
- 9 Bathroom
- 10 Open to below

1,000 > 1,500 SQ. FT.



- 1 Master bedroom
- 2 Entry
- 3 Bathroom
- 4 Kitchen
- 5 Deck
- 6 Living room
- 7 Loft
- 8 Closet
- 9 Bathroom
- 10 Open to below

Heritage

People who love traditional wooden cottages will fall for this luxurious two-bedroom. With a massive L-shaped deck that wraps half-way around, this cabin is super for weekend gatherings and family vacations. A master bedroom and bathroom are just off the living area, for easy main floor living, but there's ample room for kids or guests in the loft. Upstairs residents will appreciate their own walk-in closet

and bathroom, plus waking up and descending a staircase overlooking the focal point of the cottage—a large, open-concept living space with woodstove and U-shaped kitchen area, all lit by a wall of windows. You may also opt to add a third, lower level (plan not shown), for a convenient ground floor walkout. confederationloghomes.com



1,227 SQ. FT.
2 bedrooms
2 bathrooms
massive deck

1,000 > 1,500 SQ. FT.

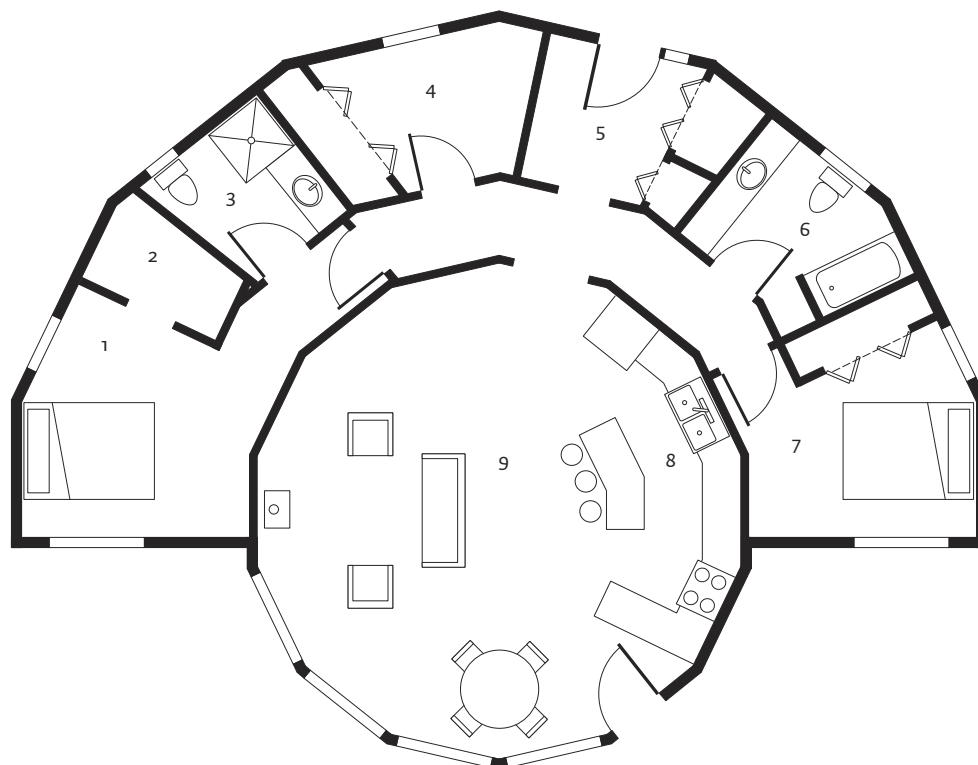
Magnolia 1300



1,322 SQ. FT.
2 bedrooms
2 bathrooms
skylight

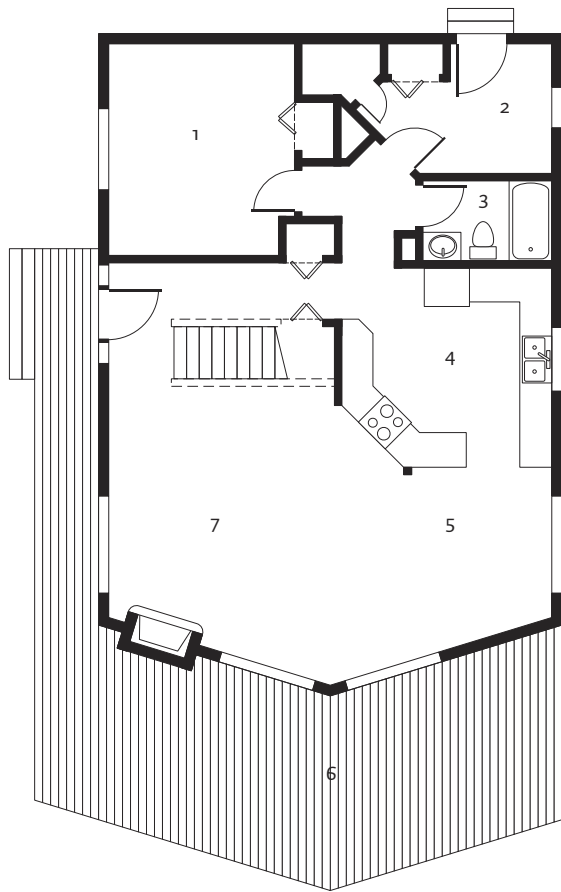
It might be hip to be square, until you see this cool cottage from Mandala Homes, a company known for a strong commitment to the environment and its striking and sustainable round house designs. The Magnolia 1300 features two bedrooms, ample storage, and a showstopper of a great room with central skylight and woodstove, all spread out over 1,322 sq. ft. of

bungalow. The spacious bedrooms—each of which has its own bathroom—are located on opposite sides of the cabin for maximum privacy. There's still plenty of common space for those who want to be social, though, given the 485 sq. ft. round great room that begs to be a setting for stylish cocktail parties. mandalahomes.com

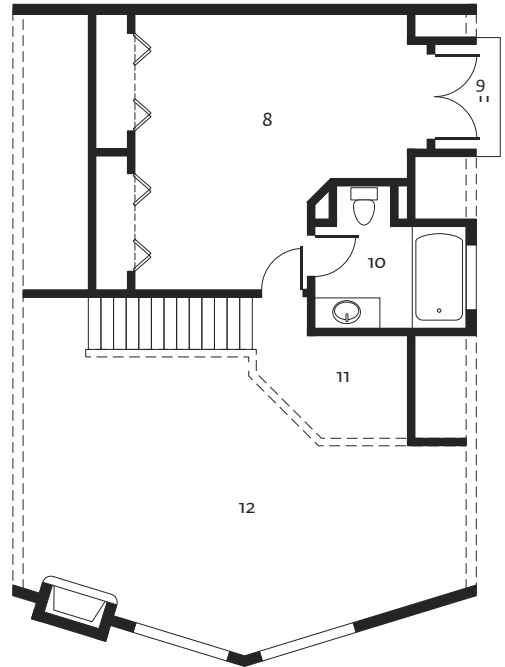


- 1 Master bedroom
- 2 Closet
- 3 Bathroom
- 4 Flex room/storage
- 5 Foyer
- 6 Bathroom
- 7 Bedroom
- 8 Kitchen
- 9 Great room

1,500 > 2,500 SQ. FT.



- 1 Bedroom
- 2 Utility room
- 3 Bathroom
- 4 Kitchen
- 5 Dining room
- 6 Deck
- 7 Living room
- 8 Master bedroom
- 9 Balcony
- 10 Bathroom
- 11 Loft
- 12 Open to below



McKenzie River

With its distinct glass prow front and stone chimney, the design-forward thinking is already apparent before you step through the front door into this unique and engaging cottage. Weekend chefs will love the kitchen (154 sq. ft.) with extra counter space, peninsula with range, and ample pantry storage. A large utility room with lots of storage and a washer and dryer is tucked

behind the main floor bathroom, making it easy for a family that loves its leisure time and spends as much of it as possible at the cottage to do just that. What will seal the deal for any cottager, however, is the sanctuary that is the master bedroom, replete with double closets, an ensuite bathroom, and a small, private balcony for some early morning fresh air. wintonhomes.ca



1,534 SQ. FT.
2 bedrooms
2 bathrooms
sundeck

1,500 > 2,500 SQ. FT.

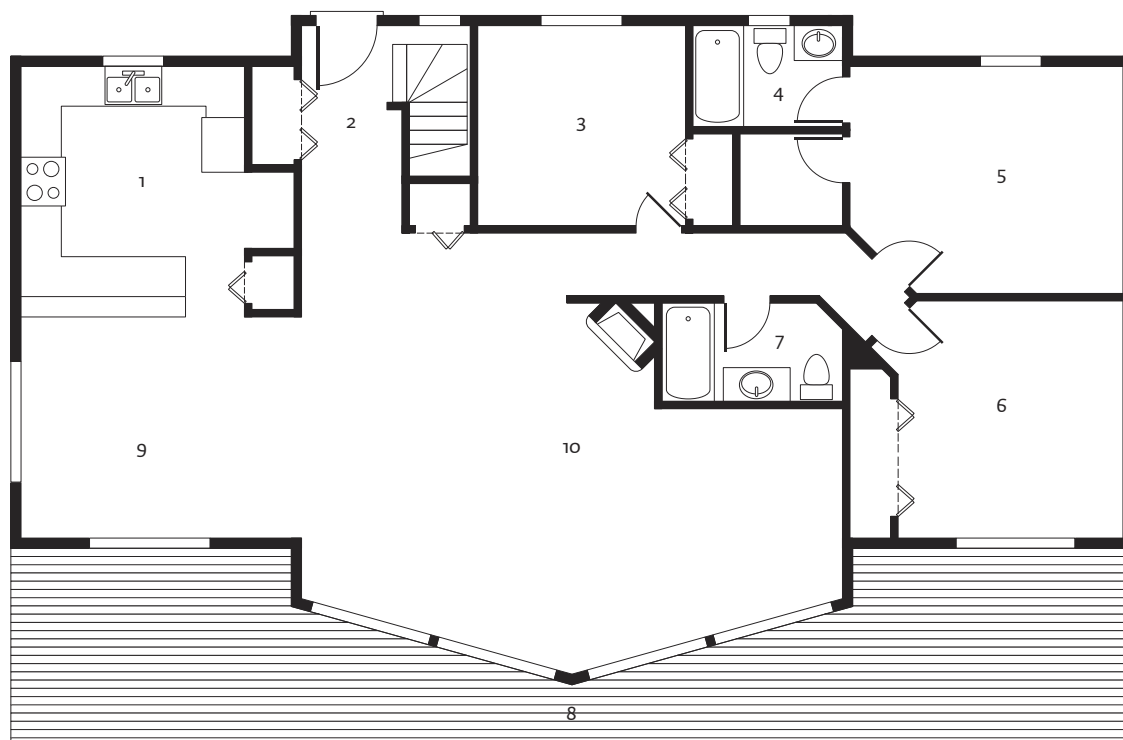
Pearce



1,565 SQ. FT.
3 bedrooms
2 bathrooms
large deck

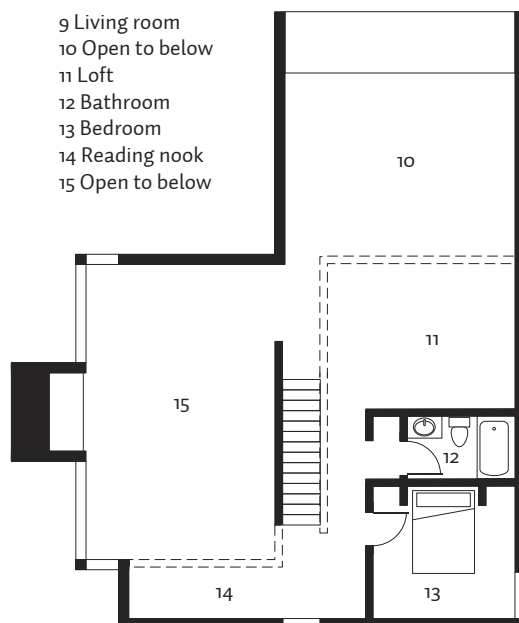
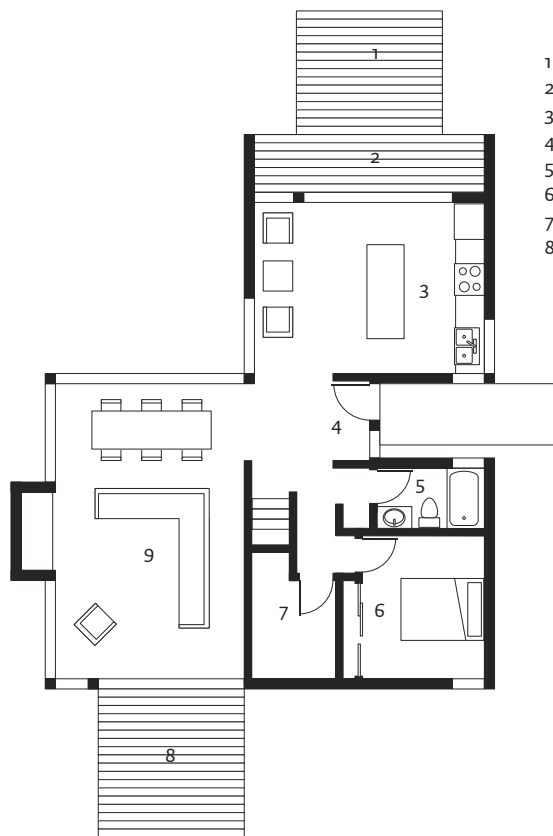
Guests will be blown away when they see how this cottage's great room opens onto a monster-sized deck (practically big enough to build another small cottage on) that adds an astounding 784 sq. ft. of outdoor living space to an already roomy three-bedroom plan. This vacation house is built to launch a thousand epic barbecues and an equal number of good times. A breakfast bar

between the dining room and kitchen turns meal prep and clean-up into a party unto itself, and a central fireplace provides a secondary focal point for cool nights and rainy days. Added bonus: Simcoe Building Centre can take clients from design to completion, making it easier to reach what really matters: getting those ribs started on their long, slow road to greatness. [simcoe solutions.com](http://simcoe.com)



- | | |
|------------------|---------------|
| 1 Kitchen | 6 Bedroom |
| 2 Entry | 7 Bathroom |
| 3 Bedroom | 8 Deck |
| 4 Bathroom | 9 Dining room |
| 5 Master bedroom | 10 Great room |

1,500 > 2,500 SQ. FT.



Pioneer

The modern cabin lifestyle isn't for everyone, but those who love striking, cutting-edge cottage design are bound to fall hard for the Pioneer. A trail-blazing company, Form and Forest was launched with a design that won an award of merit from *Canadian Architect*, and, ever since, it has developed a loyal following. Its designs challenge convention by merging urban chic with forest paradise.

Occupying 1,740 sq. ft., this angular cabin features two decks, two bedrooms, a reading nook, and a vast living room with tall floor-to-ceiling glass windows on three sides—sure to be a conversation piece. This isn't your grandma's log cabin in the forest. But for those who appreciate architectural innovation and iconoclastic design, it's way better.
formandforest.com



1,740 SQ. FT.
2 bedrooms
2 bathrooms
2 lofts

1,500 > 2,500 SQ. FT.

J-2018

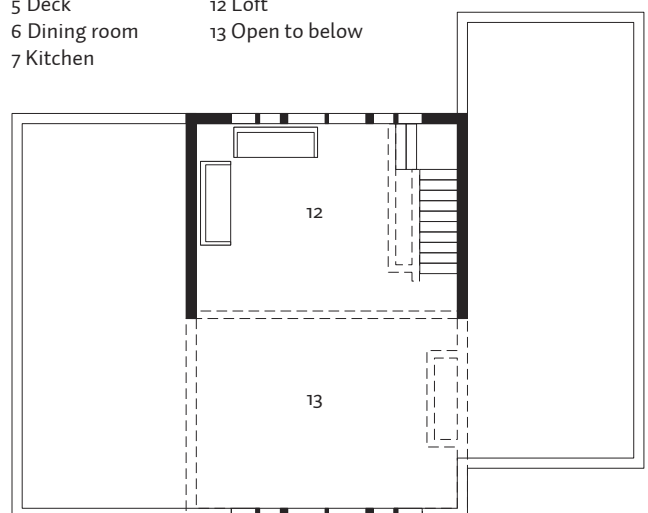
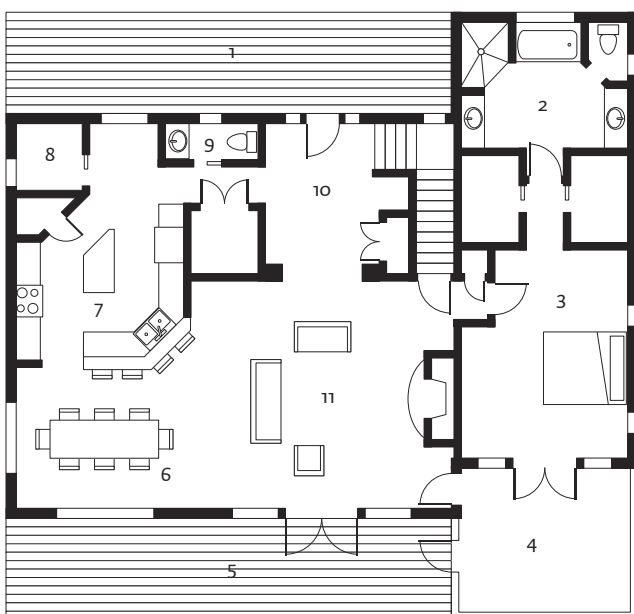


2,018 SQ. FT.
1 bedroom
1.5 bathrooms
2 covered porches

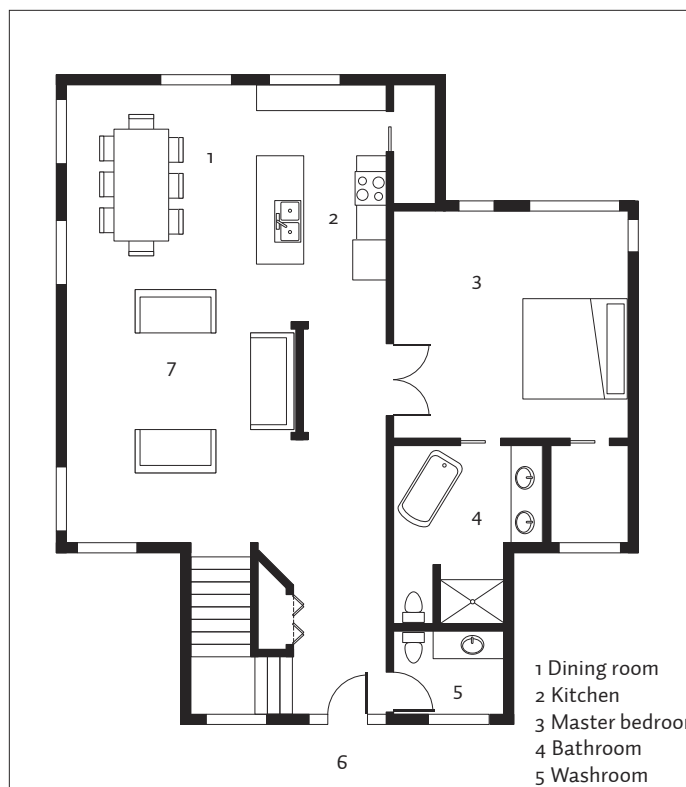
Ready to live the dream and make cottage life a year-round reality? If so, Robinson Residential's J-2018 is just the ticket, since it has all the comforts of a primary residence, including a phenomenal kitchen with a breakfast bar, pantry storage, and an island; plenty of living space; and a world-class master bedroom, with five-piece bathroom, two walk-in closets, and access to a screened porch. The cottage is built

to minimize the trials of two-level living: the action's primarily on the main floor, and a 358 sq. ft. loft could serve as either a guest room or a family room. Design features include a nook with a built-in desk, a stylish "eyebrow" roofline, a barrel-vault ceiling in the great room, and a large stone fireplace with a tapered chimney. Home sweet home. robinsonplans.com

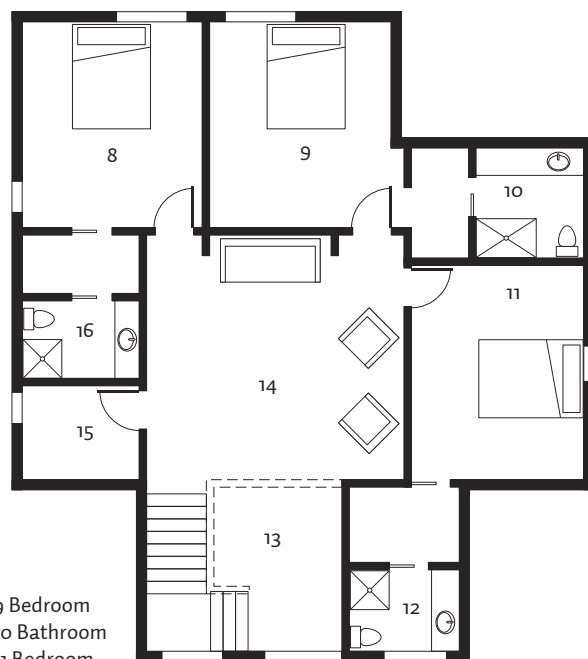
- 1 Covered porch
- 2 Bathroom
- 3 Master bedroom
- 4 Screened porch
- 5 Deck
- 6 Dining room
- 7 Kitchen
- 8 Laundry
- 9 Washroom
- 10 Entry
- 11 Living room
- 12 Loft
- 13 Open to below



> 2,500 SQ. FT.



- 1 Dining room
- 2 Kitchen
- 3 Master bedroom
- 4 Bathroom
- 5 Washroom
- 6 Porch
- 7 Living room
- 8 Bedroom



- 9 Bedroom
- 10 Bathroom
- 11 Bedroom
- 12 Bathroom
- 13 Open to below
- 14 Family room
- 15 Closet
- 16 Bathroom

Stoneham

Families with teens or grown children will appreciate the space and privacy this vacation home affords. The second storey features a family room big enough to fit a pool table and three bedrooms with ensuites, forever ending feuds as to who left the bathroom floor wet or muddy. In addition, the master suite is spread out over 391 sq. ft., making for a private haven with sliding

glass doors leading onto the rear section of the wrap-around porch. The open-concept living and dining area covers a 433 sq. ft. expanse, and an adjoining good-sized kitchen includes a handy breakfast bar, ideal for family reunions and get-aways for grown-up couples for whom at least half the fun is making the meals. timberblock.com



2,556 SQ. FT.
4 bedrooms
4.5 bathrooms
wraparound porch

> 2,500 SQ. FT.

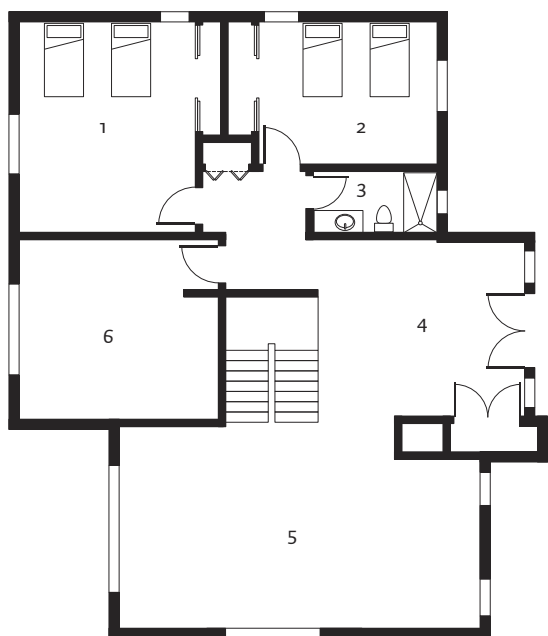
Saltair



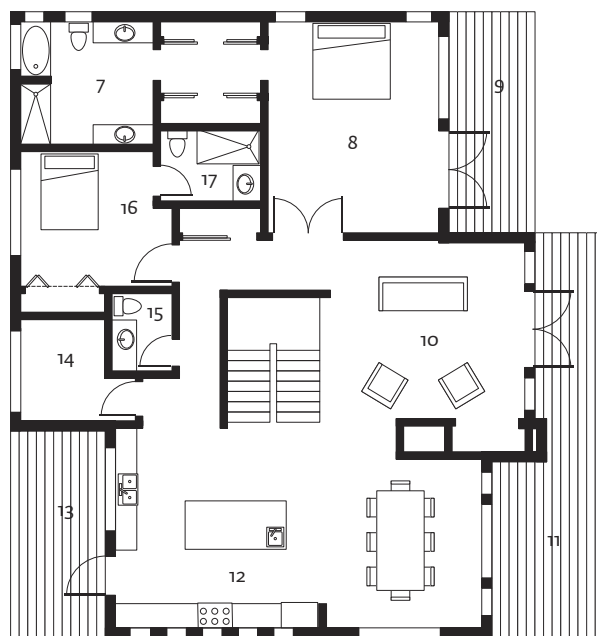
2,665 SQ. FT.
4 bedrooms
3.5 bathrooms
flex room

Don't really see the appeal of roughing it? Neither, apparently, do the people at Ajia, who have designed the stunning Saltair to come equipped with all the conveniences of a luxurious vacation home. It's not hard on the eyes, either, with its exposed timber frame with stone accents and the contemporary look of its multi-dimensional roof-lines, which can be configured for rain-water collection, if desired. Moving inside, there's ample

storage, a large laundry room, space to sleep at least eight, and a ground floor flex room that could be converted to accommodate extra guests or into a spacious office for staying in touch with the "real" world. Natural light streams into the living room, the dining area, and the bright kitchen, a space that demands to be used for a crawfish boil paired with plenty of bubbly and beer. ajia.ca

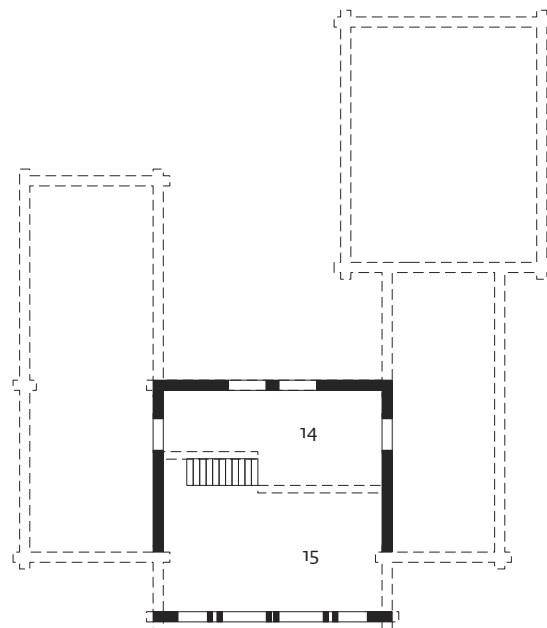
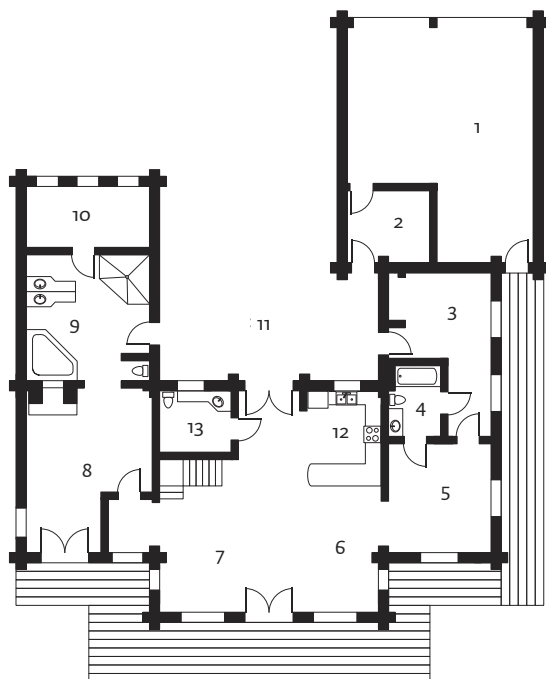


- 1 Bedroom
- 2 Bedroom
- 3 Bathroom
- 4 Foyer
- 5 Flex room
- 6 Storage and mechanical



- 7 Bathroom
- 8 Master bedroom
- 9 Deck
- 10 Living room
- 11 Deck
- 12 Kitchen
- 13 Deck
- 14 Laundry
- 15 Washroom
- 16 Bedroom
- 17 Bathroom

> 2,500 SQ. FT.



- | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1 Double garage | 6 Dining room | 11 Courtyard |
| 2 Shop | 7 Living room | 12 Kitchen |
| 3 Bedroom | 8 Master bedroom | 13 Washroom |
| 4 Bathroom | 9 Bathroom | 14 Loft |
| 5 Playroom | 10 Closet | 15 Open to below |

Paradise Valley

This lodge-style log cabin has sturdy good looks and a rustic character, just right for people trying to duck out of the fast lane for a little taste of slow. The main living area is open, dominated by a great room with a stunning wall of windows and an old-timey open kitchen that only needs retro appliances to make it complete. The rugged simplicity ends here, however, with luxurious

bedrooms bordering the living room on either side—a master with an adjacent bathroom with a spa tub, and, on the other side, another bedroom with an adjoining playroom. The upstairs loft space can be used for an office area or a guest suite, since you'll want to show off the inviting space and share it with your pals.

norseloghomes.com



3,015 SQ. FT.
2 bedrooms
2.5 bathrooms
playroom

> 2,500 SQ. FT.

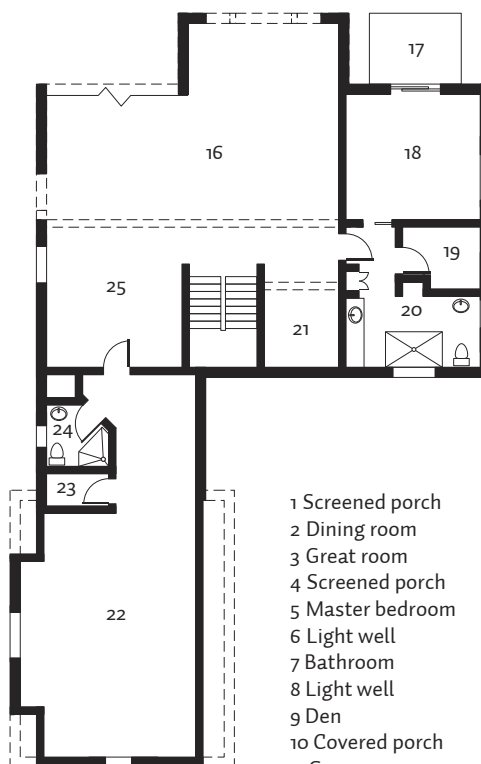
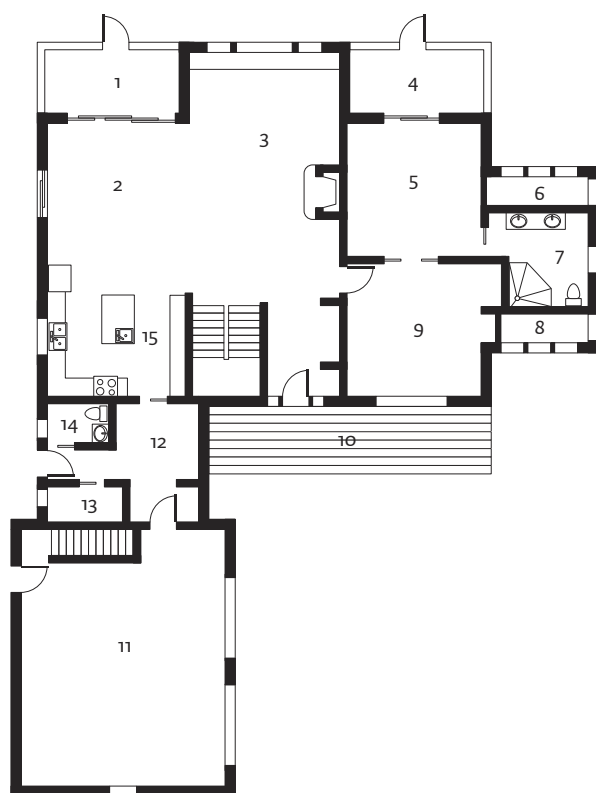
Melody Lane



3,245 SQ. FT.
3 bedroom suites
3.5 bathrooms
spacious great room

There's something for everyone in this roomy cottage that mixes up large open space with nooks, crannies, and dens that make it easy to carve out a little "me" time. Timber framing in the interior and front porch gives this 3,245 sq. ft. retreat a solid feel, and design features such as light wells and soaring vaulted ceilings supply the drama that makes this house a genuine showpiece. The

main floor totals 1,958 sq. ft. and includes a spacious kitchen and adjoining dining area, great room with fireplace, den, master bedroom, and three porches. The second level is a roomy 1,287 sq. ft., featuring two full bedroom suites separated by a small computer station and work area positioned on a bridge with a view to the great room. riverbendtf.com



- 1 Screened porch
- 2 Dining room
- 3 Great room
- 4 Screened porch
- 5 Master bedroom
- 6 Light well
- 7 Bathroom
- 8 Light well
- 9 Den
- 10 Covered porch
- 11 Garage
- 12 Laundry
- 13 Pantry

- 14 Washroom
- 15 Kitchen
- 16 Open to below
- 17 Balcony
- 18 Bedroom
- 19 Closet
- 20 Bathroom
- 21 Open to below
- 22 Bedroom
- 23 Closet
- 24 Bathroom
- 25 Loft

BEST LAID PLANS

{Continued from page 70}

Now the project fell into place. Named for the patio doors that line its broad front and rear faces, Sixteen Doors House features a central kitchen, living, and dining area, flanked by bathrooms and storage areas and two bedrooms. Its style is simple and modern and, most important, it could perch on concrete-block piers across the slope. Hester had already commissioned a topographical survey of the lot. In his spare time, he worked away at the kitchen table at home, surrounded by scissors, glue, and cardboard, converting the survey into a three-dimensional model. As the building plan firmed up, he next assembled a tiny balsa-wood model of the cottage, setting it here and there on the equally tiny lot to find the best fit on the slope. (Hester's photos of the Lilliputian cottage are featured in his "Lewis-Hester Cottage Project," a 28-page prospectus he created for interested contractors.)

Opting to work with a firm nearby, Hester took his ideas to the Home Hardware Building Centre in his hometown of Milton, Ont. "Neil showed me the plan and pictures from the magazine and told me what he was thinking about," says projects coordinator Greg Alton, who helps select and organize construction jobs through Home Hardware's subsidiary, Beaver Homes and Cottages. "He'd already decided on a lot of the design details." The Beaver team—including designers, project managers, and consulting engineers—turned Hester's sketches into building code-compliant plans, worked out the cost, and dealt with the nitpicky but vital engineering details. Many of the 33 piers supporting the cottage, for example, had to be different heights, to compensate for the uneven bedrock beneath the structure.

Hester's laser focus "makes him a little bit of a different case" from the standard cottage customer, says Dave Bond, the marketing manager for Home Hardware's package building sales. Most buyers need help to get their ideas on paper. "We've got a list of around 128 questions I ask clients," he says. "I warn them that I'm going to give them homework. I tell them, 'Look at the lot, look at the setbacks, and look at the orientation



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BEST LAID PLANS

{Continued from page 105}

of the cottage for summer and winter use.' People who are willing to go out and do some of this stuff end up being better customers because they understand the issues, and they want to be involved." If that seems like work, Bond says it pays off: "You don't want an experience where you end up saying, 'If I had this to do over again, I'd do it differently.'" Ultimately, about a quarter of Beaver customers order a cottage out of the company's plan book, as is. Most of the rest make alterations or tweaks to an existing design. Relatively few strike out on their own, as Hester and Lewis did. No matter the approach, the process needs to be collaborative.

Over six months of back-and-forth between Alton and Hester, the Beaver team delivered plans (two sets), cost estimates, revisions, and then the final blueprints. Most changes were made to keep the project within budget, including eventually cutting the number of patio doors from 16 to 10, and dropping plans

for a screened porch. "We'll do whatever you like, up to two sets of changes," says Bond. "After that, there is an additional charge, but it's up to the store whether they pass that along or not. If it's just a couple of tweaks, sometimes we just pick that stuff up."

In Hester's case, "the design was relatively simple," says Craig Ritchie, manager of Home Hardware's Architectural Solutions Group. "Because it's a three-season building, that reduced the need for insulation or a complex heating system." It also exempted the cottage from the Ontario Building Code's 22 per cent limit on the amount of windows in the wall space.

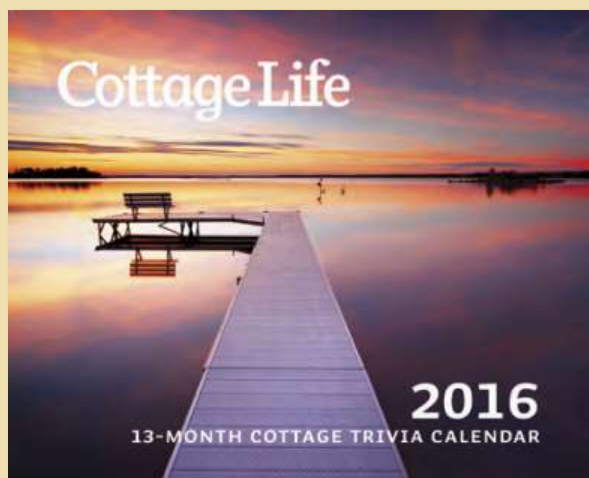
Even if they're allowed, too many windows can be a mistake. "Too much glass will cook you," Bond points out. "Lay out the cottage for cross breezes and be aware of your exposures." Fortunately, Hester had Lewis's experience to draw on. Her family's Honey Harbour cottage faced west, making for oven-like temperatures and sleepless nights. To avoid that problem, Hester calculated the arc of the summer sun and

checked his design by moving a flashlight over his model. The verdict: the cottage faces just southeast enough to escape overheating.

Having more eyes on the design is a benefit, because it's hard for untutored designers—even persnickety ones such as Hester—to anticipate every issue. He knew he needed a contractor to turn Beaver's building package into a cottage, so he hired Frank Penfold of Pointe au Baril. (He'd need additional help with installing the septic system.) Penfold suggested flipping the dining-living-kitchen area around, a fix that shaved plumbing costs by putting the kitchen closer to the septic system.

When the couple's daughter, Kim, looked over the plans, she said, "We need more space for friends." The last-minute design solution was to erase two sets of doors at the rear of the cottage, replacing them with four feet by eight feet bump-outs—comfy nooks for sleeping or lounging. Along with a generous sofa, the change means the cottage can sleep seven. A 12-foot deck on one end of the cottage serves as a base for tents.

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As a bonus, Hester says the bump-out is built “to fit an inexpensive Ikea bed.”

Additional savings came from installing the shed roof that eliminates the ridges and valleys of more complex roof designs and from using untreated pine siding. The 10 windows that give the cottage its glass-walled look (six across the front, four on the back) are actually regular eight-foot sliding glass doors. “When you buy that many doors, you get a really good price,” Hester says.

The result is both shelter from the elements and a showcase for them. Because the cottage is 80 feet wide but just 16 feet deep, light floods inside, brightening even dull days. The screen-equipped sliding doors make the walls permeable, drawing in the onshore breezes, the scent of conifer, and the sound of powerboats puttering in the channel. “We wanted something that lets in a lot of breeze and a lot of light,” Hester says, sipping his coffee in front of the petite Danish Morsø woodstove he and Lewis gather around on chilly evenings. In the kitchen, beneath an eye-popping photo

of the Killarney landscape, all salmon-pink granite with an azure sky, Lewis is tending a pot of homemade soup for lunch. Ruthie, the couple’s 12-year-old wheaten terrier, sprawls across the floor tiles. On the other side of the room, another of Hester’s photos—a huge study of canoe paddles—commemorates their paddling days.

“We both like being outside, and the design of the cottage gives us that—there’s nothing much separating us from the outdoors,” Hester says, offering a guided tour of the cottage. The look is clean, elegant, and functional, uncluttered by interior posts or supports. The steel diagonal braces that reinforce the structure are hidden within the walls backing the kitchen and dining areas. Cabinets are restricted to lower walls, tucked under the sink or beneath the kitchen island. Even in the bedrooms, “we didn’t put closets in. We put hooks on the walls,” he says. “We wondered whether that was going to be an issue, but it isn’t. Most guests don’t miss them. They like the coat racks and are happy just parking things

on the benches and floor.” Scratching the screened porch from the plans hasn’t been a problem, either. “That was one thing everyone told us we should have,” Hester admits. But thanks to the patio doors, “the whole cottage is like a screened porch.”

After everyone packs up and boats to the mainland, the see-through cottage reverts from beacon of hospitality to quiet refuge. The breeze flits through the open doors, ruffling the pages of Lewis’s book as she reads. Hester surveys the water, occasionally spotting a deer as it swims the narrows. In a benefit even he didn’t anticipate, the moon rises across the channel on summer and autumn evenings, bathing the cottage in silver light.

Drawing up plans for your dream cottage isn’t for everybody, but Hester’s glad he took the risk. He’s also grateful for the good advice he received, both from people and from that rattler. “It’s the best—and last—cottage that we’ll ever need.” 🐍

Writer Ray Ford, based in Powassan, Ont., has won 33 National Magazine Awards.

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HOW TO BUILD A COTTAGE

{Continued from page 61}

you think about “overflow spots,” such as bunkies, guest rooms, and pull-out couches. One big no-no, says building inspector Walker: claiming that a garage or boathouse loft is for storage when it's really an extra bedroom. Septic systems are designed for specific numbers of residents, and he says that boosting that number will inevitably lead to problems. “Once that septic saturates the field, it's going to find the lake. Or it ‘daylights’ and you get the smell because it's close to the surface. And, boy oh boy, your neighbours are going to be calling me.”

A ROOF OVER YOUR HEAD

A permanent, low-maintenance metal roof may seem like a prudent—although, pricier—choice, but make sure you can live with the sound, advises Thom. “We’ve had a number of people complain about the sound of raindrops on a metal roof, while other people love it,” he says. For those going off-grid and requiring passive water collection, a metal roof will be your preferred option, says Osburn, and the sound can be mitigated with rigid insulation under the metal surface. To deal with winter, snow guards should be installed on a metal roof to break up the snow as it slides off so that it's less damaging, or you risk ripping down eavestroughs or burying someone as they stand at your door. While a cedar-shingle roof may look lovely, inspector Walker considers it a fire hazard out in the bush. “A few tinders land on your roof and your place is gone,” he says. What about asphalt shingles? “They’re a good no-nonsense alternative,” says Osburn.

DECKED OUT

“As much outside usable space as possible”—that's the standard that Osburn applies to cottage builds. Still, the price is a consideration, with a basic pressure-treated deck typically costing in the range of \$20 to \$30 per square foot. Add covered areas, steps, benches, flower boxes, additional levels, or curves and complications such as building around trees and you'll push costs even higher. If your exterior door is at grade, Depenier advises stone or interlocking brick,

rather than wood decking, for its look, ease of maintenance, durability, and, with proper drainage, eco-friendliness. Consider how the surface will feel under bare feet or if you're lying down on it, says Thom. "And how easy is it to get from indoors to outdoors? How many steps do you have to go down with that tray of martinis?"

ACCESS FOR ALL

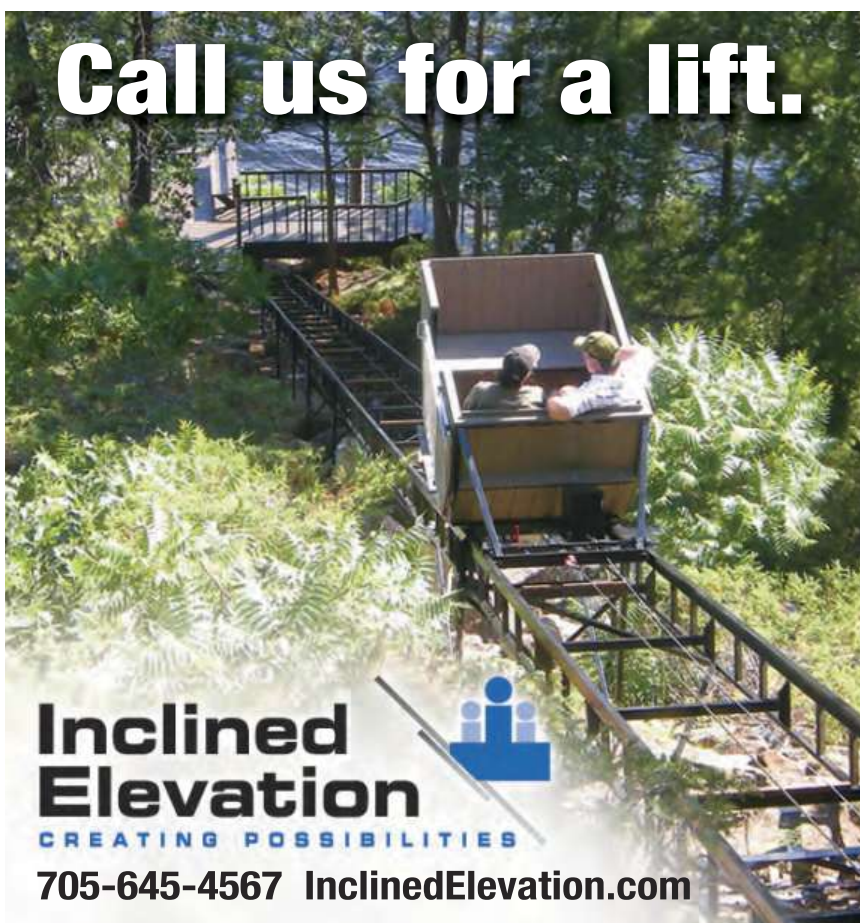
"If you can drive to the property, it's smart to have at least one ground-level bedroom," says Thom, so that your property will be more accessible for those who are less mobile or who have physical disabilities—including yourself, as you age. "Think about windows that are set at a comfortable height to see out of if you're in a chair, and use glass in exterior railings," says Depencier. "Opt for wide doorways and hallways and walk-in showers"—all things that will improve accessibility for any occupant or visitor.

THE VIEW FROM HERE

For some, the cottage view is all about the water—and, yes, you'll also want to be aware of where the sun rises and sets. But don't forget the other views, advises Thom. "Maximize the experience of the setting," he says. That may mean placing a window low in a wall, with the top only three feet from the floor, "but if it looks into some wonderful ferns, that's a view." Think about what types of light you want to enter the building: "sunlight, reflected light, starlight, splattered light, twilight." As you watch the sunset, turn around. "Sometimes when the sun sets, when you look to the east, it's a gorgeous lilac colour." Think beyond "a rectangular building staring at the lake," he advises, and make sure you allot some of your window budget to non-lake views. "Sometimes the canopy of a tree makes a beautiful view," says Thom. Also think about pulling that view farther into the building, suggests Depencier, by planning wall placement, French doors, and other interior design choices that extend views. And don't forget ventilation; being able to capture the breeze off the lake on warm summer nights may be just as important as that sunset view. 🌿

Kim Pittaway wrote "What's the Deal?" in the Spring 2015 issue of Cottage Life.

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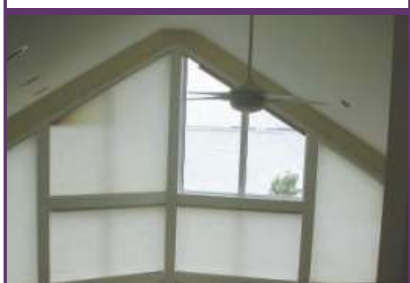
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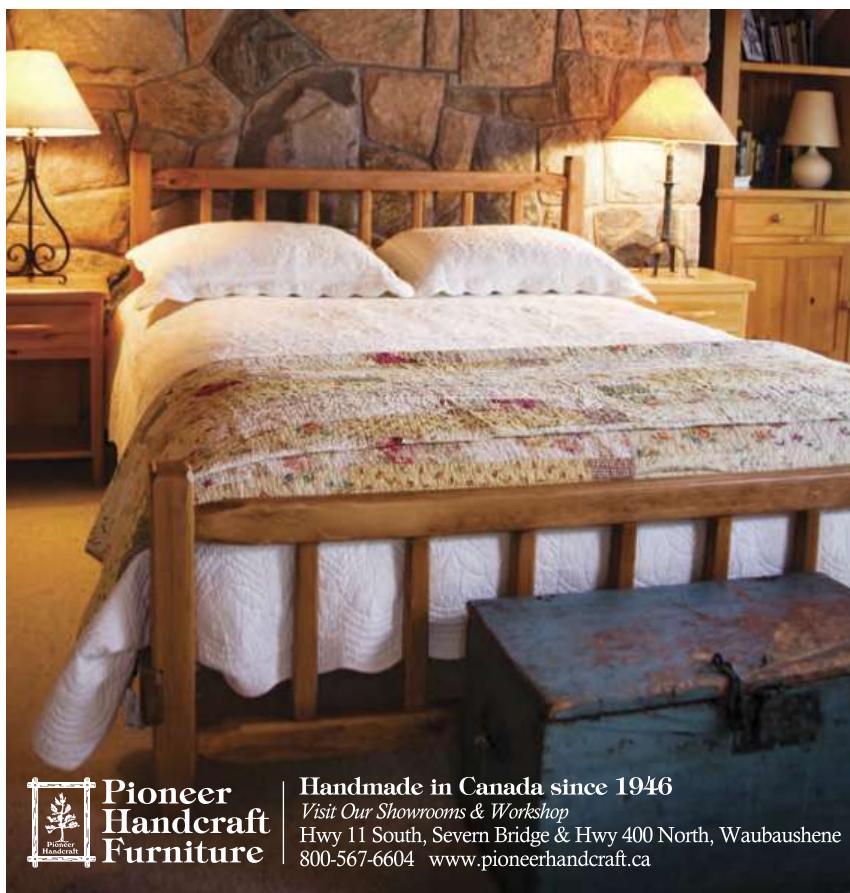
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BAY ESTATES - This is a picture perfect 2 +1 bdrm home situated on a nicely landscaped lot. The home features forced air propane furnace & fireplace, a den/office & a large family room. The lovely landscaped lawns & gardens boast a triple car garage. This is a lovely property in excellent condition. Asking \$397,000. MLS#1031091

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Lake of the Woods



Greg Kirby, Broker
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Whitefish Bay, Lake of the Woods - \$379,000

Four season 1,117 s/f 3 bedroom, 2 bath cottage with spacious front deck and hot tub, lakeside gazebo, crib and floating docks, detached garage on 0.56 of an acre low profile property with 100 feet sand and rock-studded shoreline. Offered turnkey. Exceptional privacy. Road access.

Route Bay, Lake of the Woods - \$795,000

Open design 2,000 s/f 4 bedroom, 2 bath back split cottage with lower level guest suite, double detached garage, dry land boathouse with electric marine railway on 1.82 acre medium profile lot with 146.9 ft. rock shoreline. Road access.

Milner's Bay, Little Sand Lake - \$350,000

Three bedroom approx. 1,500 s/f stockade style log cottage (circa 1920) with two-story boathouse featuring 3 bedrooms and screened wraparound porch, plus guest cottage on 18.72 acres titled land with 990 feet low profile frontage, exceptional privacy. Water access.

Long Bay, Lake of the Woods - \$995,000

Custom built two-story 3,100 s/f 5 bedroom, 3 bath year round lake home with 825 s/f 2 bedroom guest cabin and floating boathouse plus additional boat and swim docks, located on 1.21 acres with 190 feet frontage, private sand beach. Surrounded by Crown land. Road access.

Bigstone Bay, Lake of the Woods - \$595,000

Low profile 3.5 acre island with 1,515 feet slate rock shoreline, 784 s/f hand-hewn 2 bedroom log cabin, 320 s/f hand-hewn log guest cabin, dockside gazebo, boathouse and much more. Water access.

Longbow Lake - \$310,000

Ideal for a home or cottage, approx. 1.6 acre low and level profile vacant lot bordering a north exposure sheltered bay with 319 feet frontage. Road access.



BAY ESTATES - 5 bedroom 3 full bath waterfront home. Main floor kitchen with custom oak cabinets, dining room overlooking Lake Huron. The great room/living room has vaulted ceilings with large windows overlooking the bay. Enjoy that view while sitting in front of the custom fireplace. Master bedroom with water view, en suite with a stand up shower and whirlpool soaking tub. The lower level has a full kitchen and two other bedrooms. This lower level can be used as an in law suite or an apartment for income potential. It has a walk out to the back yard where you can enjoy the summer on the gently sloped yard to the beach area. This spectacular home is a must see with many more upgraded features.



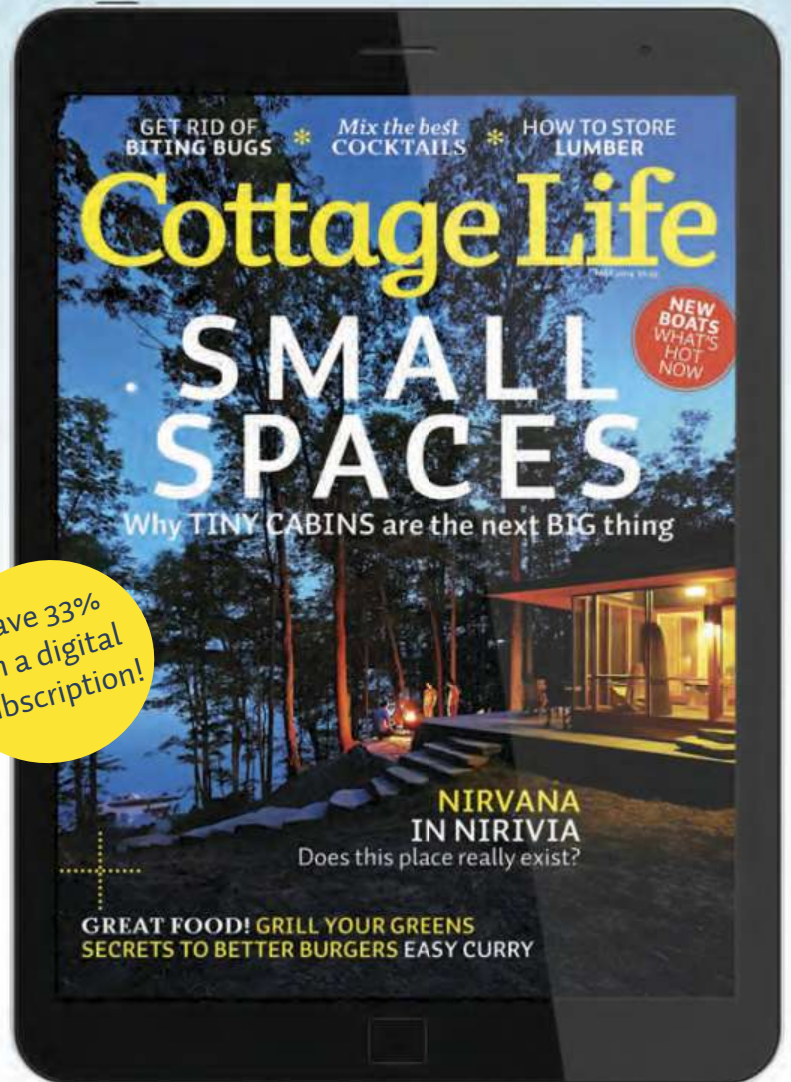
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The sneaky, stealthy long-tailed weasel is a ferocious cottage-country predator

Real slim shady

By Tim Tiner

IT'S HUGE!

The long-tailed weasel and other animals with odd proportions.



Eastern screech owl
Eyes = 4 per cent of body weight

Glimpsed deking and darting around bird feeders and cottage woodpiles, the high-strung, low-slung, ever-curious long-tailed weasel is a squirrel-sized prowler of scrubby fields, forest patches, and hedgerows. In October and November, the long-necked, beady-eyed predator changes its cinnamon coat to white and, if young, searches for new territory.

FORMIDABLE APPETITES A rocket-fuel metabolism drives the long-tailed weasel to eat up to one-third of its own weight in voles, mice, shrews, and chipmunks every day, dispatching them with a spine-crushing bite to the back of the neck or a suffocating throat grip. The fearless, solitary, methodical mustelid can bring down quarry up to five times its own size, most commonly young or weakened rabbits and hares, and occasionally birds as large as a grouse.

GEODIETARY RESTRICTIONS Svelte females can shimmy through vole tunnels, but most males are too big to manage the squeeze. Since small rodents are scarce above the snow in winter, and little bunnies are all grown, long-tailed weasels become rare beyond the southern reaches of the Great White North.

DINING IN Weasel circuits have one or more fur- and feather-lined hunting lodges in or under stumps, logs, rock or brush piles, or the renovated burrows of rodent meals. Chambers are often provisioned with fresh game for later feasts.

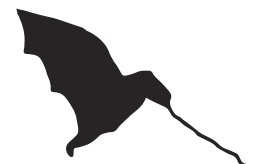
DISTANT DAUGHTERS Born between mid-April and early May, young long-tails forage with their mothers through summer and head off on their own by autumn. Females, many already pregnant after mating when only three or four months old, travel farthest afield. Their brothers generally settle closer to home and first mate the following spring or summer. 🐾



Shrew
Brain = 10 per cent of body weight



Long-tailed weasel
Tail = 50 per cent of body length



Tube-lipped nectar bat
Tongue = 50 per cent longer than body length



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